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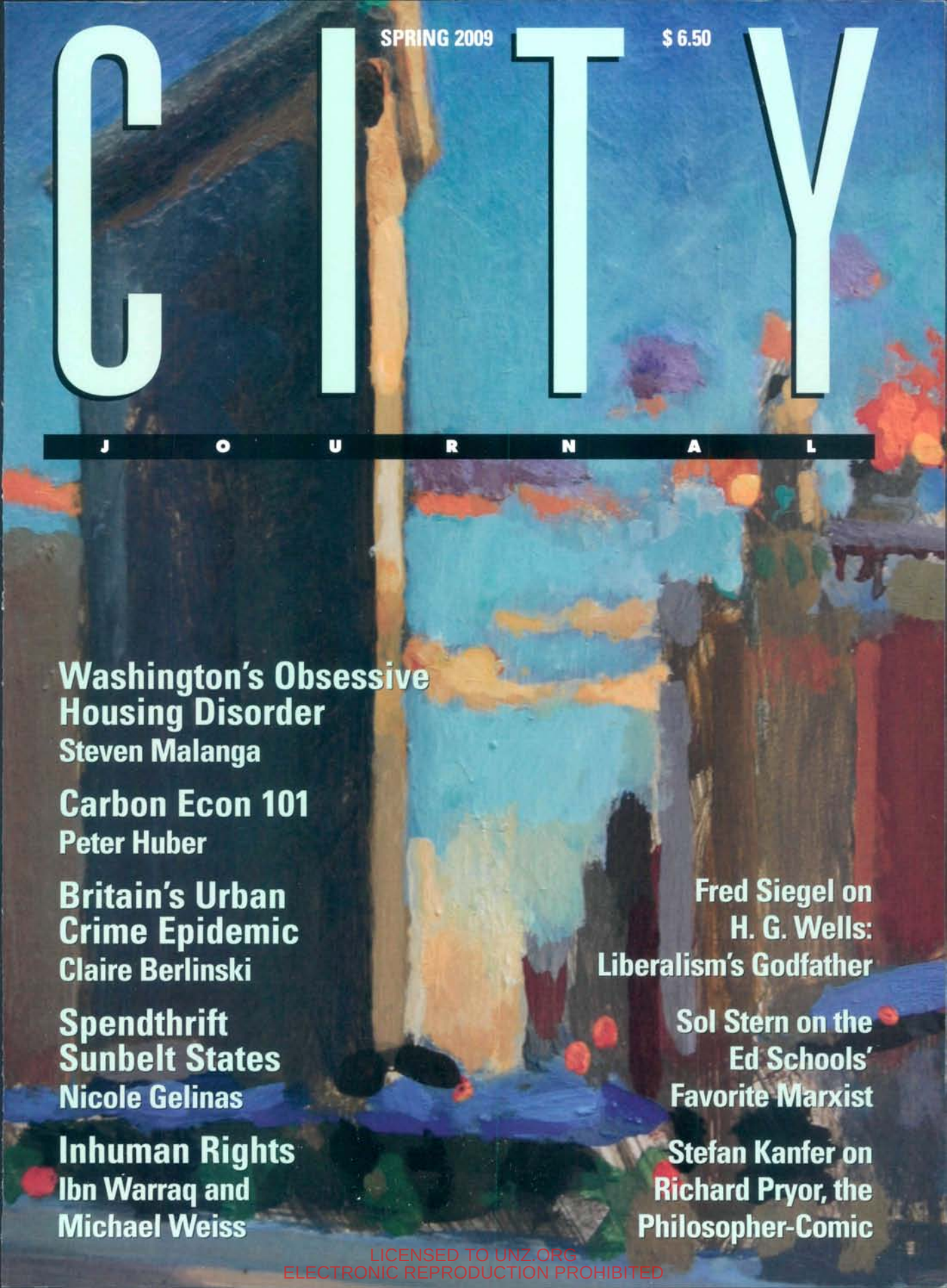

Washington's Obsessive Housing Disorder
Steven Malanga

Carbon Econ 101
Peter Huber

Britain's Urban Crime Epidemic
Claire Berlinski

Spendthrift Sunbelt States
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Inhuman Rights
Ibn Warraq and Michael Weiss

Fred Siegel on H. G. Wells: Liberalism's Godfather

Sol Stern on the Ed Schools' Favorite Marxist

Stefan Kanfer on Richard Pryor, the Philosopher-Comic

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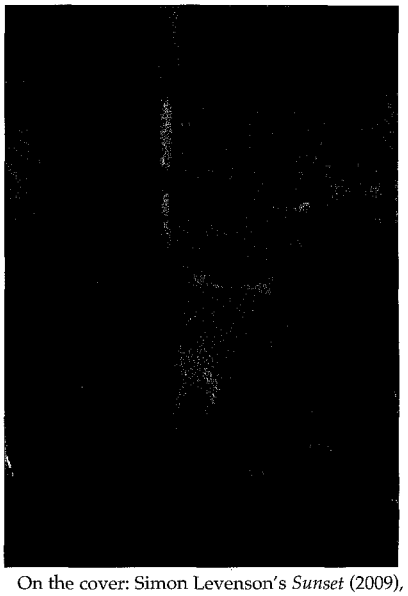

On the cover: Simon Levenson's *Sunset* (2009), one of a triptych of oil paintings of the Flatiron Building in New York City. For more information about Levenson's work, consult www.simonlevenson.com or call Bottoms Fine Art at (805) 695-0888. Courtesy of the artist.

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In Prospect

"Obsessive Housing Disorder": that's what Steven Malanga's remarkable cover story on page 14 calls Washington's nearly century-long effort to boost American homeownership. Politicians across the political spectrum have viewed homeownership as fundamental to the American dream, a source of social stability and moral uplift. Yet from Herbert Hoover's Own Your Own Home campaign in the twenties to the massive housing interventions of the New Deal to the urban mortgage programs of the sixties to the Clinton-era Community Reinvestment Act, the results have often been the same: relaxed lending standards, housing bubbles, massive defaults as people take on mortgages they're unable to afford—and then economic downturns as things come crashing down. Even as we try to clean up the latest subprime-mortgage mess, Malanga reports, advocates from both parties are at it again, browbeating the feds not to abandon their commitment to the idea of every American's owning his own home.

We'll have a harder time turning the subprime-damaged economy around if we follow the misguided advice of the anti-carbon zealots, says Peter Huber in "Bound to Burn" (page 26), a blast of common sense in an often-fuzzy environmental debate. As Huber shows, the U.S. and other rich countries can't stop the world's developing nations from burning cheap, abundant carbon: they need the energy to grow. And if we unilaterally slash emissions by adopting less efficient, more expensive energy sources, we'll simply drive our power-hungry industries (and the jobs they support) to poorer, less technologically advanced countries, reducing our competitiveness and making pollution worse. A more sensible approach, Huber maintains—that is, if we don't want to hamstring our economy but really do worry about carbon emissions—is to promote better land use, reforestation, and ocean sequestration to help suck carbon out of the air and sink it back into the earth.

The British government says that crime keeps dropping. The British people say that crime is out of control. Who's right? In "The Dark Figure of British Crime" (page 34), Claire Berlinski gets beneath the numbers—and sides with the public. The official numbers, she argues, aren't capturing Britain's rising urban disorder and menace, much of it inflicted by anomic youths on the prowl. Poor policing is partly to blame, Berlinski says; U.K. cops need to study New York's crime turnaround closely.

Too often, modern thought views individual men and women as mere debris, swept along uncontrollably by historical and social currents. *City Journal* has always rejected this shrunken view of humanity; to us, Thomas Carlyle's "the history of the world is but the biography of great men" seems much closer to the truth, for both good and ill.

This issue accordingly devotes several essays to major political and cultural figures who have profoundly influenced our world. On page 95, Fred Siegel recognizes H. G. Wells, advisor to four presidents and the leading public intellectual of his era, as the "godfather" of modern liberalism. It's a rediscovery that unsettlingly exposes Wells's elitist contempt for democratic capitalism and his eugenic dreams. Sol Stern's "Pedagogy of the Oppressor" (page 75) explores the malign influence of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian thinker whose Marxian views unfortunately feature prominently in ed schools throughout the United States. Stefan Kanfer turns his experienced biographical eye on Richard Pryor, a "black Pagliacci" whose comedy exposed white racism, black family dysfunction, and his own inner demons (page 112). And on page 55, Guy Sorman visits with ninetysomething economist Anna Schwartz, who channels the spirit of Milton Friedman to argue that the government's response to the credit crisis misdiagnoses the problem, which is about trust, not liquidity.

Men and women can make history, then. But they don't completely control it, as Alain de Botton reminds us in his elegant "The Consolations of Pessimism" (page 44). It's a little piece worth meditating on the next time someone says that the business cycle has been overcome and that the good times will last forever.

—*Brian C. Anderson*

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oundings

A New Regulatory Framework

Three agencies, based on the three main goals of financial regulation

Luigi Zingales

The American system of financial regulation is a patchwork of agencies. At least ten federal regulators oversee financial-services companies; different regulators sometimes supervise the same entities; and since the onset of the financial crisis, regulatory agencies have taken on roles not originally envisioned or mandated, leading to further redundancy. This patchwork is not the creation of a schizophrenic legislator but rather the accumulation of a century of financial crises, each of which led to the creation of a new agency. In the current crisis, instead of forming yet another agency, we should rethink the country's financial regulatory architecture entirely.

History shows why our regulatory system is such a hodgepodge. The Federal Reserve was created in 1913 to address the liquidity problems experienced during the panic of 1907; eventually, the Fed became responsible for controlling inflation and unemployment. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) was born in 1933 to prevent the kind of bank runs that had forced more than 5,000 banks to close in the early 1930s. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) came into being in 1934 to prevent the stock-market manipulations that had prevailed during the 1920s. And the Office of Thrift Supervision was created in 1989, following the savings-and-loan crisis of the late eighties. In fact, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) is the only financial regulatory agency *not* created following a crisis; it came about in 1974 as the result of the intense lobbying by Chicago exchanges to protect their autonomy from New York.

So it's not surprising, when you consider their origins, that these agencies have recently been stepping on one another's toes. Transparency and investor protection, for example, have been pursued not just by the SEC (its proper role) but also by the CFTC and the Fed. Similarly, the Fed, the FDIC, and the SEC have all been trying to help stabilize the financial system since the crisis began.

The current regulatory system runs into problems with coordination and the communication of information. Lack of coordination across different agencies can tempt industry to avoid regulation entirely. For example, state insurance regulators never oversaw credit-default swaps, even though they were essentially insurance products, because they were called "swaps," which made them sound like standard derivatives. As for communication of information, consider the Bear Stearns crisis. Because the Fed didn't regulate investment banks—that was the SEC's job—it didn't learn in time the extent of Bear's poor financial condition or the risks that Bear's failure would pose to the entire banking system, and thus it had no time to plan a possible intervention.

How to fix these problems? One common suggestion is centralization, in which all regulatory functions are rolled up into one organization, as Britain does with its Financial Service Authority (FSA). In practice, however, even the FSA represents only a partial centralization, because some key monetary-policy functions remain with the Bank of England. And during the Northern Rock crisis, Britain's supposedly centralized system failed at the very goal for which it was created: effective coordination. Another possibility is the so-called functional approach to regulation, in which regulators oversee entities according to the kind of function that those entities perform. So, for instance, the same regulator would oversee money-market funds and banks, since they perform the same function—providing short-term liquidity to individuals and firms.

But the functional approach does nothing to eliminate two more problems with our current regulatory system. The first is the trade-off among different objectives. At the risk of oversimplification, I would say that government intervention in the financial system has three main goals: price stability, financial-system stability, and protecting investors and borrowers against fraud and abuses. At present, the various regulatory agencies have to make troubling trade-offs among these three objectives. For example, when the Fed extended a loan to Citigroup's ring-fenced toxic assets to help prop up the bank, it traded off price stability for financial stability. If

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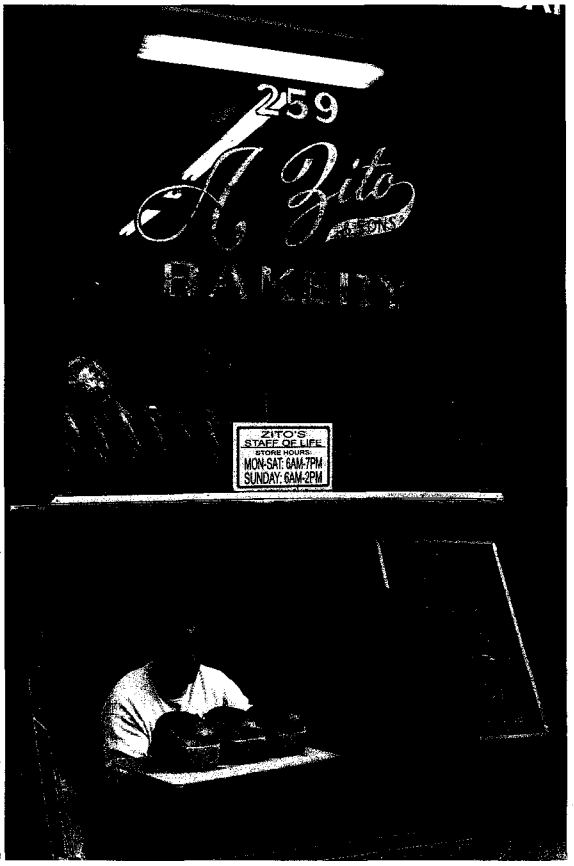
those assets turned out to be worth much less than expected, the Fed would find it impossible to recoup the liquidity it injected, which would risk causing an increase in inflation, because it would have pumped money into the economy backed by nothing. Similarly, when the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) initiates new rules on mark-to-market accounting, it swaps the goal of transparency (and thus investor protection) for the goal of system stability, which can be compromised by the fact that mark-to-market may exacerbate economic cycles. Having such trade-offs made within agencies, and thus non-transparently, poses serious risks.

The second additional problem is that when responsibilities overlap, it's hard to hold any one agency or individual accountable for any outcome. Whose fault was it that Bear Stearns was forced into a shotgun merger with JPMorgan? Was it the SEC's, for failing to oversee the risk of investment banks, or the Fed's, for failing to provide liquidity, or a lack of coordination between the two, or all of the above? As long as fundamental goals are divided in this way, the blame game will prevent each from taking responsibility for the results.

Hence the need to rethink regulatory architecture along clear lines of responsibility and goals. We should allocate financial regulation and supervision to three different agencies, each responsible for only one of the three principal goals of financial-system regulation. One agency would be in charge of price stability, more or less conducting the traditional monetary policy that the Fed currently conducts. A second agency would be tasked with systemic considerations, absorbing some of the extraordinary roles that the Fed has taken on during the current crisis, together with other solvency issues (often overseen by state insurance regulators). Finally, a third agency would focus on protecting the little guys, whether they're investing in stock, depositing funds at a bank, borrowing from a bank, or buying an annuity or other insurance product.

The beauty of such a system is that each of the three agencies would have a simple and easily measurable goal. The price-stability agency would have to control inflation. Its effectiveness could



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be easily measured by the inflation expectations embedded in the difference between standard Treasury bonds and Treasury inflation-protected securities (TIPS). The system-stability agency's goal would be minimizing the risk of a systemic collapse. Its accomplishments could be measured by the price of credit-default swaps on the major financial institutions, which captures the probability that these institutions might fail. Finally, the investor-protection agency's success could be measured through surveys of the trust that people feel in the stock market and other financial institutions. Major trade-offs among these goals—which, as we've seen, present serious difficulties in the existing setup—would have to occur *across* agencies, not within them, and thus be conducted in a more transparent fashion.

The main challenge of such a design would be striking these compromises across agencies and

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communicating crucial information among them. A new board could be set up consisting of the heads of the three agencies, together with a small number of other Senate-appointed representatives. Just as with the Fed board, the minutes of this new board would be publicly released (possibly with a delay), making the trade-off decisions transparent and the responsibility for them clearly allocated.

The current financial crisis is not due to lack of regulation, as many like to say, but to poorly designed and poorly enforced regulation. A better regulatory regime, based not on historical accident but on the chief objectives of financial regulation, would help prevent future crises and help our economy regain its vibrancy.

The Least Free State

Unless reform comes to Albany, restrictive New York will continue to suffer.

Steven Malanga

A new study by the Mercatus Center at George Mason University, *Freedom in the 50 States*, is the most comprehensive effort to date to rank the states on how their public policies influence "individual freedom in the economic, social and personal spheres." It includes dozens of variables, from social and personal freedoms (such as parents' right to educate their own children) to regulatory freedom (such as the degree of occupational licensing requirements) to fiscal liberty (as measured, for instance, by states' debt burdens, which represent a constraint on future generations). Finishing dead last in the study's freedom index is New York State.

New York earns that dubious distinction "by a wide margin," the study reports. Businesses operating in the state won't be astonished to hear that its economic freedom is poor, thanks to a tentacular bureaucratic regulatory regime, a civil justice system that favors plaintiffs over defendants, and high taxes and crushing per-capita government debt. But New York's citizens, who like to consider themselves enlightened and socially permissive, might be surprised at how low their state ranks on the study's index of personal freedom—third from the bottom. That's because in New York, personal freedoms are often narrowly defined as liberties that Albany politicians deem suitable for citizens to enjoy. Otherwise, state policy is extremely restrictive. The study notes, for instance, that while New York has liberal gambling laws, regulations on home schooling are extensive, eminent-domain laws are confiscatory, and mandates on health insurance limit New Yorkers' choices.

What are the consequences of New Yorkers' lack of freedom? The best way to judge is to look at the collective condition of the states with the worst rankings. Joining New York at the bottom of the index is New Jersey, in 49th place, followed by Rhode Island and California. Together, New York, New Jersey, and California face some $65 billion in budget deficits in 2009, amounting to more than two-thirds of the budget gaps faced by all 50 states. These states' stratospheric spending and taxes have stifled economic growth and left them scarily unprepared for the economic downturn.

Job growth has been lousy, too. New Jersey has just completed a decade of virtually no private-sector job gains, even during the boom years that preceded today's steep recession. Meantime, Rhode Island's unemployment rate is the third-highest in the country, followed by California's. The bottom-ranking states have also gained reputations as the places that citizens most want to flee. California, New Jersey, and New York (and Rhode Island, too, relative to its small population) have among the highest levels in the country of domestic out-migration—that is, leaving one state for another.

What a contrast with the study's freest states: New Hampshire, Colorado, South Dakota, Idaho, and Texas. All have unemployment rates at or below the national average (New Hampshire's is 5.1 percent, or 3 points below the nation's, according to February's Labor Department statistics). Every one of these states is also a net winner in terms of domestic migration, with far more U.S. citizens entering than leaving.

The Mercatus study makes clear that what ails New York cannot be boiled down to any one of its curbs on freedom, whether it's a high income-tax rate, restrictions on development, or a

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bureaucratic licensing regime. Rather, New York suffers from the vise grip that Albany's politicians have on life in general. Reform, therefore, won't be as simple as cutting a tax or eliminating a regulation. New York needs fundamental change that makes the state democratic again, and it needs reform candidates willing to push for that change.

Such candidates would battle to remove the right of legislative redistricting from state lawmakers—who protect themselves when they draw voting districts so that 98 percent of them get reelected—and give it to a nonpartisan commission, charged with redrawing districts to make them competitive again, as states like Iowa and Arizona have done. A reform agenda might also include instituting term limits to eliminate Albany's lifetime sinecures, as well as adding greater transparency to state and local government operations by making expenditures and contracts available in greater detail online, so that citizens can see firsthand how their tax dollars get spent.

Undemocratic and unfree countries often restrict the flow of their businesses to other, more appealing, places. Since New York State doesn't have that option, its long decline will continue—unless it has a new birth of freedom.

Interstate Confiscation Clause

Massachusetts wants even more tax revenue—from New Hampshire.

Daniel J. Flynn

Should New Hampshire businesses have to collect Massachusetts sales taxes from border-crossing shoppers? That's the issue in *Town Fair Tire* v. *Massachusetts*, a case before the Bay State's Supreme Judicial Court with ramifications for commerce and constitutional law well beyond New England.

In 2003, a Massachusetts Department of Revenue audit uncovered invoices from three New Hampshire outlets of the Town Fair Tire company (TFT) to customers with Massachusetts addresses. Because Connecticut-based TFT also has locations in Massachusetts—and therefore benefits from various public services there, from police protection to road maintenance—the Massachusetts Appellate Tax Board argued that the company's New Hampshire locations had an obligation to collect taxes from Massachusetts customers and remit them to Massachusetts. As soon as TFT's technicians noticed a customer's Massachusetts license plate and inspection sticker, the board said, they should have informed store clerks—unaccustomed to collecting sales taxes in tax-free New Hampshire—to collect Massachusetts taxes on those purchases. So Massachusetts presented TFT with a bill for $108,947, the state's estimate of the taxes that border-crossing customers should have paid from October 2000 through April 2003.

Massachusetts has dubbed these taxes not "sales" taxes but "use" taxes. They date to the mid-sixties, when the state passed a permanent sales tax and, to keep residents from evading it and ostensibly to protect local merchants, began requiring its residents to pay the same 5 percent on items bought elsewhere that they would "use" within Massachusetts. Until recently, no one advanced the interpretation that out-of-state merchants had to collect the taxes from Massachusetts customers; indeed, the law outlining the use tax clearly states that it "shall be paid by the taxpayer" upon filing state income taxes. But with compliance from its 6 million residents minimal—and enforcement impossible—Massachusetts has shifted focus to three out-of-state stores that some of those residents patronize.

TFT, in turn, has sued Massachusetts. In response, the state's attorney general's office hasn't attempted to prove the "use" on Massachusetts roads of the tires that TFT sold in New Hampshire. Instead, it simply deduces that such a conclusion is "inescapable," "certain enough," "a virtual certainty," and "highly probable." The state doesn't know whether the customers connected with Massachusetts addresses on TFT's invoices registered their vehicles in Massachusetts. Massachusetts also doesn't know how many of its residents subsequently paid their use tax; the state assumes, apparently, universal noncompliance. Its argument, then, rests upon a series of

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assumptions. Several seem reasonable, but even reasonable assumptions don't constitute legal proof.

Massachusetts faces another legal obstacle to its use-tax plan: the United States Constitution. The arbitrary enforcement of a law against a single business in a single state raises equal-protection concerns. Why Town Fair Tire and not, say, Sears? Why tires and not refrigerators, automobiles, and flat-screen TVs? Further, the Constitution's interstate-commerce clause forbids any state from intruding into the internal business affairs of another. Massachusetts may have the muscle to bully out-of-state merchants belonging to chains that happen to have other outlets in Massachusetts, but the legality of doing so is another matter.

If TFT loses the case, the consequences for commerce could be considerable. Will Rhode Island merchants have to start collecting the Massachusetts 5 percent use tax as well as their own state's 4.5 percent sales tax? Or would they merely remit the difference between the two levies to Massachusetts? For that matter, will *Massachusetts* merchants have to start collecting taxes from shoppers visiting from Connecticut, since Connecticut, too, has a use tax? Though ostensibly protecting in-state businesses, Massachusetts has potentially exposed them to the same kind of onerous, out-of-state intrusions that it has thrust upon Town Fair Tire.

As TFT's lawsuit asserts, such head-spinning scenarios would transform merchants into "detectives" tasked with figuring out where the merchandise they sell will wind up being used, "traffic" cops charged with inspecting drivers' licenses and plates, and "customs officers" interrogating patrons about their state of residency. (And "accountants," one might add, with knowledge of the various tax rates of all 50 states.) If the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court finds the myriad legal arguments against cross-border sales taxes unpersuasive, then perhaps the specter of merchants dealing with 50 separate tax codes, and 50 sets of auditors, will dissuade it from radically reinterpreting an old law. Should interstate sales taxes somehow survive, many businesses certainly will not.

Mayors Put Work First

Reentry programs for ex-prisoners show promise.

Kimberly Hendrickson

About 700,000 federal and state prisoners return home each year in America, and most soon commit more crimes. A 2002 Department of Justice study found that over 67 percent of released prisoners are rearrested within three years; about half, in the same three years, get locked up again. Recidivism—the propensity of ex-offenders to be rearrested, reconvicted, or reincarcerated—has long vexed policymakers. What's new is that the current recidivism rate is high (5 percentage points higher than in the 1980s) and that prison expenditures are crippling state budgets. It's unlikely that social scientists will soon agree on either the cause of high recidivism rates or a large-scale way to reduce them. But mayors around the country are promoting a small-scale response: government-run "reentry" programs that seek to assimilate ex-offenders into society. The programs' approaches vary, but many adopt a philosophy called "work-first"—that is, getting ex-offenders jobs quickly.

Mayors have begun to experiment with work-first reentry for several reasons. One is that the older reentry model—an expensive cornucopia of social services for ex-cons, including housing assistance, drug treatment, family counseling, therapy, and support groups—hasn't succeeded. Another is that foundations—and, more recently, the federal government—have been embracing the employment model.

A third reason is the success of welfare reform in encouraging work among the formerly dependent. During the heyday of welfare reform, people thought to be unemployable because of minimal education or poor skills were moved into work by a focus on job placement instead of social services. The labor market, it turned out, could absorb large numbers of new entry-level workers, and many welfare recipients were willing and able to work, once meaningful incentives were in place. Why shouldn't the same principle apply to ex-cons?

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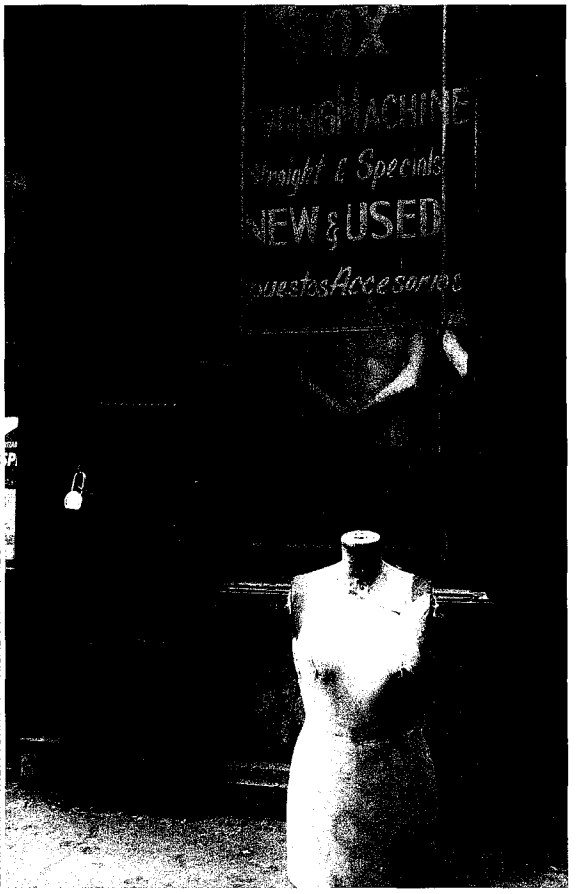
It's true that they face real obstacles to employment. An estimated 40 percent of inmates in state and federal prisons do not have a high school diploma or GED. Most have scant legitimate job experience or work history. Ex-offenders are banned from many types of work and are required to disclose their criminal records on many job applications. But employer attitudes about hiring former convicts often depend on whether they apply for work independently or go through a job-placement agency. Intermediaries who place and support ex-offenders find that businesses are actually *more* willing to hire their clients, in many circumstances, than to hire non-offenders. "If you get the men right as they are coming out of jail, they have learned to take orders," explains Peter Cove of America Works, a for-profit company that places hard-to-serve clients. "What employers see are people who are willing to work, and frankly, who will do some of the jobs that other people are unwilling to do, such as heavy lifting."

The mayor-led reentry effort in New York City, called Employment Works, relies on private-sector intermediaries, such as the highly regarded Center for Employment Opportunities, to place probationers in jobs that pay relatively well—$9 an hour and up. The city's goal is to place 500 to 600 probationers in jobs each year and to achieve job retentions of at least a year. About 29,000 people are sentenced to probation in New York City annually, and about half are unemployed, so the program will have ample opportunity to test its effectiveness.

Chicago's reentry program, run out of the Mayor's Office of Community Development, also relies on private intermediaries to place ex-offenders, but its approach is different. Its scale is significantly larger than New York's—it seeks to employ more than 1,000 clients each year—and it's open to all ex-offenders, not just probationers. The city works to place clients in private- and public-sector jobs. For instance, it worked closely with the Safer Foundation of Chicago to get clients hired on city work crews, initially in waste-management positions. When waste management became more automated, the city joined with Safer to form the Community Ambassadors Program, which employs former convicts as tree trimmers and ground-maintenance workers. "We are giving back to the communities we once tore down," says Abraham Ramos, one of the program's supervisors and an ex-offender. "My crew feels good about going to work, and the work makes them feel good about themselves."



EDWIN MARTIN/NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEGATIVE NO. 81837D

It may not take a Chicago-level multimillion-dollar budget to run a reentry program, however. Mayor Cory Booker is dealing with a reentry problem of considerable size: every year, 1,600 or so ex-cons return from state prison to Newark, a city that (despite recent improvements) continues to suffer from high crime, high unemployment, and a laundry list of urban ills. When Booker came into office in 2006, the city faced a $180 million budget shortfall. So rather than starting with a big, stand-alone reentry initiative, Newark folded its ex-offender work programs into the

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city's broader workforce initiatives: a service center at Essex County College, where at-risk populations get help with job training and placement; the One Stop Career Center in Newark, which identifies job opportunities and provides training for city residents; and a new Port Career and Business Development Center, where Newark residents can seek port employment. The mayor hired a small, able staff to assess the reentry situation. For several years, it studied other cities' efforts, tracked what happens to prisoners once released, developed relationships with departments and agencies, and established performance benchmarks. This modest strategy held the city over until more funding turned up. Now, with a recent infusion of federal and foundation money, the mayor's staff plans to put its research to use and implement an aggressive work-first initiative. (*City Journal*'s publisher, the Manhattan Institute, is working with the Booker administration on this project.)

Several random-assignment studies of work-first reentry programs are currently under way, and their preliminary findings are encouraging. For example, the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation's latest report on New York's Center for Employment Opportunities indicates that those placed in jobs within three months after release are significantly less likely to have their parole revoked, to be convicted of a felony, and to be reincarcerated. True, most studies of recidivism rates are studying volunteer participants in work programs, raising questions of self-selection. Perhaps the kind of people who choose to enter work programs would be less likely to reoffend even without the benefit of the programs themselves.

The most serious potential weakness of work-first reentry programs, in fact, is that they are usually voluntary. Welfare-to-work programs, in contrast, required work from welfare recipients. The great majority of ex-offenders do not participate in work programs, and those who do are generally free to leave. While work is frequently a condition of parole, parole officers are seldom part of the job-placement process and are not committed to its achievement. New York University professor Lawrence Mead, a leading welfare-reform scholar, suggests a possible solution: get the criminal-justice system (and possibly the child-support system) heavily involved in work-entry efforts. Parole officers, like welfare caseworkers before them, could be invested in a "culture of work" that stresses the value of employment and getting ex-cons into the workforce. Mead recommends, as a first step, pilot programs that require work for ex-offenders and punish unemployment with tough sanctions.

In the meantime, though, mayors' piecemeal programs deserve support. Ex-cons' churning from prison to society, and then back again, exacts a heavy human toll, from the suffering of people in the low-income neighborhoods where crime is concentrated to the devastating effect on families when fathers cycle in and out of prison. City budgets feel the impact, too, from the expense of rearresting criminals and policing high-crime neighborhoods to the cost of social services (released prisoners often end up in homeless shelters). And the crisis is about to get worse: as federal and state governments feel the pinch of the tough fiscal climate, they likely will make cuts in prison populations. More ex-convicts will move from prisons into communities, and the number of potential criminals will go up. Locally delivered employment programs may not end recidivism—but they may be able to diminish it.

No Justice

A UN war-crimes tribunal targets free speech.

Judith Miller

In many respects, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is a groundbreaking institution. Founded in The Hague by the United Nations 16 years ago to prosecute perpetrators of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity during the brutal civil war in the Balkans, the ICTY was the first war-crimes panel to be created since the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals some 60 years ago. But now it's breaking more sinister ground. In a move that has dismayed even some fervent supporters, the tribunal is prosecuting a French journalist it accuses of publishing unauthorized information about its own proceedings. If convicted, Florence Hartmann, 46, faces a possible prison sentence of

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seven years and a maximum fine of €100,000—about $126,000 at current exchange rates.

Hartmann is no ordinary journalist. She covered the civil war for the French daily *Le Monde* and served from 2000 to 2006 as the spokesperson for the tribunal's then–chief prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte. By all accounts, she has been an energetic champion of the tribunal's mandate to bring war criminals to justice. Last August, however, it indicted her on two counts of "contempt" for "knowingly and willfully" revealing "confidential information to the public" relating to the tribunal's case against Slobodan Milošević, the former Serbian leader who died in his cell in 2006 before the end of his trial for war crimes and genocide.

Why would the tribunal turn so vengefully on one of its own? Its website posts the terse indictment without elaboration. Many of the facts and motions in the case against Hartmann are secret. Nerma Jelačić, a tribunal spokeswoman, told me via e-mail that she would not discuss what precisely Hartmann allegedly disclosed, referring me to the indictment, which cites Hartmann's discussion of two confidential tribunal decisions in three offending pages of her 2007 book *Peace and Punishment* and an article she wrote in early 2008 for the Bosnian Institute. "The tribunal must take such alleged breaches of confidentiality seriously in order to deter persons from interfering with justice and to safeguard the rule of law," Jelačić said.

Jelačić noted that the tribunal had previously indicted four journalists—all of them from the former Yugoslavia—for "knowingly and willfully" disclosing confidential information. But none of them had worked for the tribunal. And these journalists had disclosed the names of protected witnesses or aspects of their testimony in closed sessions, information that clearly endangered the witnesses and hampered the tribunal's ability to find additional witnesses willing to cooperate. Jelačić said that three of the four journalists received fines ranging from €7,000 to €20,000; one spent three months in the tribunal's detention facility at The Hague.

In her defense, Hartmann's lawyers, friends, and associates claim, first, that the information she published was already available to the public, and second, that the public had a right to know about how the tribunal had handled the case against Milošević, one of 161 people it has indicted. Hartmann's real "crime," they assert, was embarrassing the tribunal by writing about how and why its judges decided to withhold evidence from the International Court of Justice (a permanent court also located at The Hague) that might have linked Serbia to numerous wartime atrocities, including the infamous massacre of 7,500 Bosnian Muslims at Srebrenica in 1995.

In her book and her article, Hartmann criticizes the tribunal's decision to accept military documents from Belgrade in exchange for a pledge that some of the material would not be turned over to the International Court of Justice without being redacted. Bosnia had sued Serbia for genocide in the International Court, which ruled in February 2007 that while the Srebrenica massacre qualified as genocide, there was insufficient evidence to conclude that Serbia was guilty of the crime. But the court's judges never saw the uncensored copies of the documents that the tribunal had obtained from Serbia. The ruling, which caused an uproar, effectively absolved the Serbs of having to pay enormous damages to the families of Bosnian Muslim victims that had brought the suit.

In an interview with me, Hartmann stressed that neither her book nor her article disclosed the contents of any of the material that Serbia had turned over to the tribunal. What she appeared to have disclosed, she said, was how Serbia successfully argued that concerns about its "national security interests" should prevent the tribunal from sharing this material with the International Court of Justice and the public.

The tribunal's defenders say that no international court can function effectively if those who work for it and agree to keep information about its proceedings secret violate their confidentiality pledges. Indeed, in a court appearance earlier this year, presiding judge Carmel Agius of Malta rebuked Hartmann for suggesting that her alleged offense was less serious than those of the war criminals whom the tribunal was prosecuting. "I suggest," the judge said, "that you do not underestimate even

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for a second the gravity of the crime of contempt." A defiant Hartmann has refused to yield or cut a deal. "For me," she explained, "this is a question of whether freedom of the press and free expression will prevail on a subject of intense public interest and importance."

Critics of the tribunal, among them former prosecutor Del Ponte, complain about its slow work pace, lack of transparency, and inability to convict some of the most prominent defendants. Milošević, for instance, died in the middle of his four-year trial, and though Radovan Karadžić, his military chief, has been arrested, another major culprit, Ratko Mladić, remains at large. But Richard Dicker, head of the Human Rights Watch's international justice program, calls some of the criticism unfair. "The tribunal has no police force," he says. "It had to rely on highly polarized police forces often reluctant to arrest their own." And because it was new, the tribunal had to "invent things as it went along." Prosecuting "tough cases of systematic abuse at a vast distance is not easy," he says, despite a staff of 1,200 and an annual budget from UN members of $120 million. Others note that the tribunal had to keep some evidence secret to protect the identities of endangered witnesses, its sources and methods of inquiry, and other diplomatically sensitive information.

The tribunal's indictment of Hartmann, however, has stirred outrage. "Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that the tribunal set up to punish war criminals would be prosecuting a journalist who was part of the effort to bring justice to those responsible for terrible crimes," said Diego Arria, a former Venezuelan ambassador to the UN who helped create the ICTY. In fact, Hartmann's defenders say, the notion of such a tribunal's expanding its prosecutorial authority to issues of free speech is breathtaking. "She will be standing on the exact spot where Milošević stood!" said Dominique Dupuy, a French activist who campaigned for the creation of a war-crimes tribunal and is now helping run a website in support of Hartmann. "We all wanted the tribunal, but this has nothing to do with justice. It has to do with keeping the truth from victims and the public." More than 2,500 people have already signed protest petitions, and several journalists and human rights groups—among them, the London-based Article 19 and the Paris-based European Journalists Association—have urged the tribunal to drop the charges.

Mohammed Sacirbey, the former Bosnian foreign minister, called Hartmann's indictment "an effort to intimidate her." Meanwhile, her lawyers have challenged the impartiality of a special panel of judges formed to try her case. In late March, the tribunal agreed to disqualify two of the judges who were to hear the case, including Agius of Malta, but there is still no indication of when Hartmann's trial might start. The tribunal, which has convicted 60 people so far, is scheduled to complete its trials by 2010 and hear all appeals by the end of 2011. Its action against Hartmann suggests that freedom of expression might best be protected by advancing that schedule.

British Banks Are Worth Something

So why is the government threatening to get them for free?

Tim Congdon

Over a century ago, Americans had great admiration for many things British, including the British skill in finance. Before World War I, London served as the center of international banking, borrowing money from some countries at one rate of interest and lending it out to others at a higher rate. In a celebrated paper read to the 1901 Milwaukee meeting of the American Bankers Association, A. B. Stickney, president of the Chicago Great Western Railroad Company, eulogized Britain's achievement:

> England has so organized her capital by means of her magnificent banking system that she is the banker of the world, and collects tribute from all the nations of the world in the form of interest, not for the use of her wealth or capital, but for the use of her credit. Paradoxical as it may sound, it is literally true that by means of her splendid banking organization England collects

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interest upon millions and millions of her own indebtedness to other nations.

Even two years ago, London could claim, without obvious exaggeration, to be the world's leading center for international finance. Its leadership stemmed partly from its highly cosmopolitan character: banks from all nations came to London to compete in various endeavors of capital-raising. But the intensity of the foreign competition did not mean that Britain had no champions of its own. Such organizations as HSBC, the Royal Bank of Scotland, and Barclays held significant market share in a wide range of financial activities, from foreign exchange trading to bond underwriting to household insurance. They were well regarded by their peers, and in the first half of 2007 they were profitable, well capitalized, and fully regulated.

Today, thanks to the banking crisis and government mismanagement and overreaction, the situation is utterly different. The banking crisis has shown that these businesses became too heavily dependent on so-called wholesale funding—funding available from other banks and large official institutions all over the world. When that spigot turned off in August 2007, the volume of new lending dropped sharply. Stock markets and industrial output began falling and have continued to fall more or less ever since. The banks have had to write off bad debts, and in some cases have reported large overall losses, as asset write-downs exceeded their operating profits.

Still, banks' audited reports indicate that their capital continues to amount to tens of billions of pounds. Indeed, the whole British banking system has nearly $400 billion in capital. But politicians love a crisis, and Britain's politicians have proceeded to make the crisis immeasurably worse. Leading parliamentarians and commentators—including such prominent figures as Vincent Cable, deputy leader of the Liberal Democrats, and John McFall, chairman of the Treasury Select Committee—claim that the banks have gone bust and that it might be time to nationalize the entire banking system. This amounts to asserting that $400 billion has somehow vanished into a financial black hole.

Unlike the United States, Britain does not have a written constitution with Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments prohibiting the state from seizing property without compensation. But Britain is a civilized society under the rule of a law that defends property rights, isn't it? If the government nationalizes a company, precedent says that it must compensate shareholders. According to most legal precedent in the European Union, book value provides the proper basis for such compensation. One can debate, of course, the precise definition of "book value" for Britain's banks, but a fair guess is that it amounts to the capital they hold. In other words, if the British government wants to nationalize the banking system, it would have to pay shareholders about $400 billion.

If the "banks are bust" brigade has its way, however, that figure will be zero. Consider what happened in 2008, when the government did nationalize two banks—Northern Rock and Bradford & Bingley—and passed legislation designed to ensure that shareholders received next to nothing in compensation, though both banks had substantial book value when they were forced into public ownership (unlike American firms like IndyMac and AIG, which were insolvent when they became government concerns). The government justified its action by arguing that the two banks, which had encountered difficulty financing their assets because of the breakdown of the international wholesale funding market, had become dependent on loans from the state to stay in business. Given such dependency, the reasoning went, why shouldn't the state be entitled to strip shareholders of everything? In recent months, the same argument has been advanced regarding Britain's former international champions, including the Royal Bank of Scotland and Barclays—businesses with assets running into the trillions of dollars.

If the British government goes further down this road, the American Bankers Association will never again cast admiring glances at London's ability to earn interest on the money it owes. The dissolution of Britain's banking industry under Gordon Brown's premiership bears comparison with the dissolution of the monasteries under King Henry VIII. One could argue that, rather than nationalizing assets, the British state has been expropriating them.

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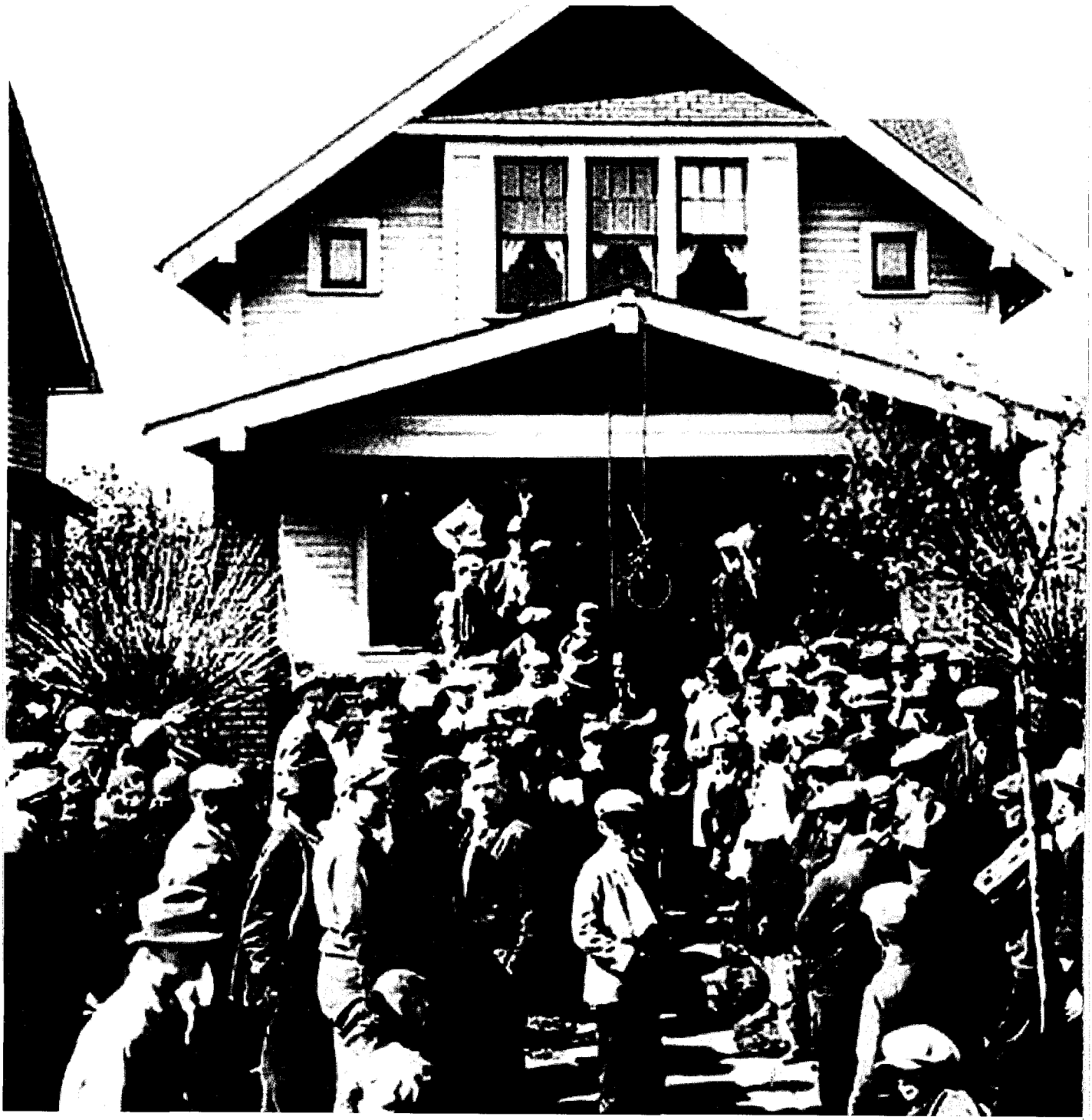
Obsessive Housing Disorder



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Nearly a century of Washington's efforts to promote homeownership has produced one calamity after another. Time to stop.

SCHERL/SUEDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG PHOTO/THE IMAGE WORKS

Steven Malanga

In December, the *New York Times* published a 5,100-word article charging that the Bush administration's housing policies had "stoked" the foreclosure crisis—and thus the financial meltdown. By pushing for lax lending standards, encouraging government enterprises to make mortgages more available, and leaning on private lenders to come up with innovative ways to lend to ever more Americans—using "the mighty muscle of the federal government," as the president himself put it—Bush had lured millions of people into bad mortgages that they ultimately couldn't afford, the *Times* said.

Yet almost everything that the *Times* accused the Bush administration of doing has been pursued many times by earlier administrations, both Democratic and Republican—and often with calamitous results. The *Times*'s analysis exemplified our collective amnesia about Washington's repeated attempts to expand homeownership and the disasters they've caused. The ideal of homeownership has become so sacrosanct, it seems, that we never learn from these disasters. Instead, we clean them up and then—as if under some strange compulsion—set in motion the mechanisms of the next housing catastrophe.

Toledo, 1933: Neighbors gather to prevent a marshal from seizing a foreclosed house.

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And that's exactly what we're doing once again. As Washington grapples with the current mortgage crisis, advocates from both parties are already warning the feds not to relax their commitment to expanding homeownership—even if that means reviving the very kinds of programs and institutions that got us into trouble. Not even the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression can cure us of our obsessive housing disorder.

We've largely forgotten that Herbert Hoover, as secretary of commerce, initiated the first major Washington campaign to boost homeownership. His motivation was the 1920 census, which had revealed a small dip in ownership rates since 1910—from 45.9 percent to 45.6 percent of all households. The downturn was likely the result of a temporary diversion of resources away from housing during World War I. For Hoover, though, the apocalypse seemed nigh. "Nothing is worse than increased tenancy and landlordism," he warned—though surely many things were worse. With little justification, he predicted that in just a few decades, three-quarters of all Americans would be renters. The press echoed the urgency. "The nation's stability [is] being undermined," the *New York Times* editorialized. "The masses [are] losing their struggle for a better life."

Without waiting to see if postwar prosperity might solve the problem, in 1922 Hoover launched the Own Your Own Home campaign, hailed at the time as unique in the nation's history. "The home owner has a constructive aim in life," Hoover said, exhorting Americans to buy property. "He works harder outside his home, he spends his leisure hours more profitably, and he and his family live a finer life and enjoy more of the comforts and cultivating influences of our modern civilization." Hoover urged "the great lending institutions, the construction industry, the great real estate men . . . to counteract the growing menace" of tenancy. He pressed builders to turn to residential construction and employers to support the cause. Some, like United States Steel and General Motors, agreed to provide parks and other amenities for the new housing developments that proliferated in response to Hoover's call.

Hoover also called for new rules that would let nationally chartered banks devote a greater share of lending to residential properties. Congress responded in 1927, and the freed-up banks dived into the market, despite signs that it was overheating. The great national effort seemed to pay off. From mid-1927 to mid-1929, national banks' mortgage lending increased 45 percent. The *New York Times* applauded the "wave of homebuilding" that "swept over" America; the country was becoming "a nation of home owners." The 1930 census would later reveal a significant elevation in ownership rates, to 47.8 percent of all households.

But beneath the surface were disquieting signs. For as homeownership grew, so did the rate of foreclosures. From just 2 percent of commercial bank mortgages in 1922, they rose to 9 percent in 1926 and to 11 percent in 1927. This happened, of course, just as the stock-market bubble of the late twenties was inflating dangerously, making the federal housing initiative all the more hazardous. Soon after the October 1929 Wall Street crash, the housing market began to collapse, just as in today's crisis, though the reasons were slightly different: panicked depositors withdrew money from their accounts, prompting bank runs; the banks ran out of capital and stopped making loans; and the mortgage market seized up. Homeowners, who in that era typically had short-term mortgages that required several refinancings before being paid off, suddenly couldn't find new loans. Defaults exploded—by 1933, some 1,000 homes were foreclosing every day.

The Own Your Own Home campaign had trapped many Americans in mortgages far beyond their reach. New homeowners who had heard throughout the initiative that "the measurement of a man's patriotism and worth as a citizen" was owning a home, wrote housing policy expert Dorothy Rosenman in 1945, had been "swept up by the same wave of optimism that swept the rest of the nation." Financial institutions were exposed as well. Their mortgage loans outstanding had more than doubled between the early twenties and 1930—from $9.2 billion to $22.6 billion—one reason that about 750 financial

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institutions failed in 1930 alone. Construction firms, too, were ensnared, since they had heeded the government's call and shifted to residential building. Housing starts jumped from about 250,000 new homes a year in the early 1920s to nearly 600,000 after the housing campaign—before slumping more than 80 percent after the crash. Construction jobs fell 70 percent from 1929 to 1933.

You might think that the Own Your Own Home campaign would have taught Washington the danger of trying to force homeownership up. Instead, the feds responded to the crisis with the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), a New Deal bailout program that made government an even bigger player in the housing market. Congress designed the HOLC to buy up troubled mortgages from lenders and then let homeowners refinance the loans with the government on more affordable terms. In theory, this would both aid strapped homeowners and clear bad loans from banks' books, allowing them to resume mortgage lending.

"The Own Your Own Home campaign of the twenties trapped many Americans in mortgages far beyond their reach."

The HOLC was a massive new federal agency, employing at its height some 20,000 people—appraisers, loan officers, auditors. By 1936, the agency's total payroll was $26.2 million, the equivalent of $388 million today. The HOLC eventually received 1.9 million applications for mortgages and approved 1 million. Despite the more favorable terms that the HOLC offered, however, about one-fifth of the new mortgages defaulted, a failure rate that would sink a private-sector bank. Many who failed to pay might have been able to, but chose not to work out any arrangement with the government and essentially challenged the feds to kick them out—which officials were reluctant to do in the face of public opposition. HOLC loan officers classified about 65 percent of the defaults as resulting either from borrowers' "noncooperation" or "obstinate refusal," according to an analysis by Columbia University economist C. Lowell Harriss. "This type of noncooperation could sometimes be attributed to a desire to obtain free housing . . . an object that, in view of HOLC's nature, was not difficult to realize," Harriss wrote.

Ultimately, the HOLC did file more than 200,000 foreclosure actions. And its purchase of bad loans never revived mortgage lending, which stayed flat for the rest of the decade. The nation's economic fundamentals were so lousy that little demand existed for new home loans.

The Depression-era federal government created many other institutions to fix flaws in the mortgage market: the Federal Home Loan Bank system to provide a stable source of funds for banks; the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to insure mortgages; the Federal National Mortgage Association (later known as Fannie Mae) to purchase those insured mortgages; and the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation to prevent future bank runs. These were valuable initiatives, but they meant that by the end of the Great Depression, the U.S. government had become the dominant force in the mortgage market.

Politicians could now use that regulated market to advance their own policy agendas—or their careers. Many housing experts of the time warned against this politicization, anticipating what was to come. Liberal housing advocate Charles Abrams, for example, publicly worried that as the Depression lifted, yet more new government plans to encourage homeownership would lure unsuspecting and unqualified lower-income families into the housing market. In a May 1946 *McCall's* article, "Your Dream Home Foreclosed," Abrams told American housewives that their "dream house will be loaded with booby traps." The foundation of a stable economic system, Abrams argued, wasn't a large

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percentage of homeowning families, as Hoover contended; it was "how sound the ownership is."

Initially, Abrams's fear might have seemed without basis. Intent on a postwar project of boosting homeownership, the federal government had passed the GI Bill in 1944, extending a range of benefits to returning veterans—including government-subsidized mortgages. With the feds footing a big part of the bill, the nation's long-moribund mortgage market came alive, more than doubling in volume between 1945 and 1950. By 1949, more than half of American households owned homes, and 40 percent of the new mortgages were government-subsidized. And with the Housing Act of 1949, Washington made permanent the powerful role in the mortgage market that it had assumed during the Depression.

But as homeownership grew, political pressure to allow riskier loans increased, too—exactly what Abrams had cautioned against. Rising home prices, a result of a booming national economy, soon began to drive some homes out of reach for ordinary Americans, among them veterans returning from peacekeeping duties in Europe and later from fighting in Korea. Under pressure to keep meeting housing demand, the government began loosening its mortgage-lending standards—cutting the size of required down payments, approving loans with higher ratios of payments to income, and extending the terms of mortgages.

By attracting riskier home buyers, these moves provoked a surge in foreclosures on government-backed mortgages. The failure rate on FHA-insured loans spiked fivefold from 1950 to 1960, according to a 1970 National Bureau of Economic Research study, while the failure rate on mortgages made through the Veterans Administration nearly doubled over the same period. By contrast, the foreclosure rate of conventional mortgages barely increased, since many traditional lenders had maintained stricter underwriting standards, which had proved a good predictor of loan quality over the years.

Ignoring these problems, the government embarked on yet another failed attempt to increase homeownership: the FHA's urban-loan debacle of the 1960s and early seventies, its most ruinous lending mistake yet. This time, the object was to solve America's urban discontent. Riots had ripped apart Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Newark, and other cities during the mid-sixties. Politicians in both parties argued that extending the American dream of homeownership to poor blacks (especially those who'd migrated from the rural South to northeastern cities) and to immigrants (especially Puerto Ricans) would stabilize urban communities and prevent further violence. "Past experience has shown that families offered decent homes at prices they can afford have demonstrated a new dignity, a new attitude toward their jobs," said Democratic congressman Wright Patman. Or as Republican senator Charles Percy bluntly put it: "People won't burn down houses they own."

So in 1968, the federal government passed a law giving poor families FHA-insured loans that required down payments of as little as $250. Not urban uplift but urban nightmare followed. Seedy speculators began snapping up homes in transitional urban areas where crime and unemployment were rising. They would make lowball, all-cash offers to fearful residents, eager to sell and get out of the neighborhood. Once they had the properties, the speculators then turned around and used the new FHA-insured mortgages to sell the homes to low-income minority families for double or triple the price.

Many of these mortgages—approved by bribed FHA inspectors—were way beyond the buyers' means. And many buyers simply weren't prepared for becoming homeowners. Some didn't realize that they were buying properties for two to three times the going rate in their neighborhoods, or even that they'd be responsible for paying for utilities, property taxes, and maintenance. In some markets, like Philadelphia and Detroit, more than 20 percent of the mortgages went to single mothers on welfare. And why not, the government reasoned—they enjoyed a steady stream of government income, didn't they? This naive view ignored the growing evidence that such households suffered from family breakdown and social disorder, which made them less than ideal borrowers. Journalists

CAMERIQUE/GETTY IMAGES

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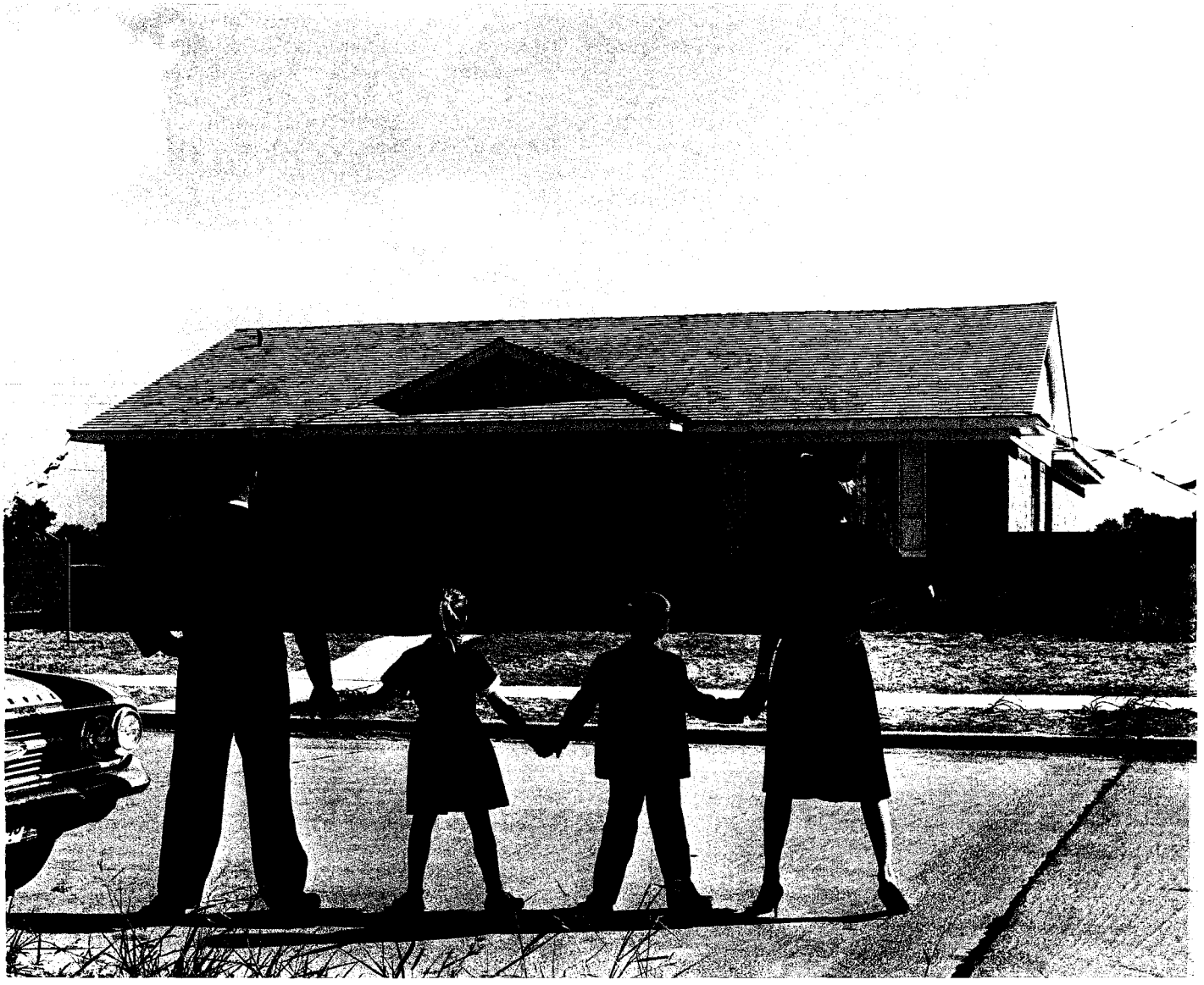

Homeownership has become so closely associated with the American dream that politicians on both the left and the right are eager to subsidize it.

also found numerous buyers who couldn't read English and had no idea what their sales contracts said.

Foreclosures spread like a horrible virus, infecting at least 20 cities. About 4,000 FHA-insured home mortgages in Philadelphia defaulted in just the three years from 1969 to 1971—more than the total number that the city had seen over the previous 33 years of FHA loans. Foreclosures made the FHA Detroit's biggest homeowner, at a cost of roughly $200 million in losses. In New York, a 500-count federal indictment estimated that some 7,500 FHA-backed homes in East New York, Brownsville, Bushwick, and other troubled

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neighborhoods had gone bust, costing upward of $300 million. In the end, the government absorbed an estimated $1.4 billion in losses nationwide.

The failed program had more than a financial cost. Neighborhoods like Bushwick—a once-stable blue-collar community in Brooklyn—fell into ruin as scores of low-income buyers simply walked away from their properties, and arsonists, an urban plague at the time, torched the vacant homes. Residents who lived near abandoned houses began sleeping on their porches with guns in their laps to ward off the arsonists. Whole blocks remained burned-out for years (see "The Death and Life of Bushwick," Spring 2008).

Sure, speculators and corrupt inspectors had duped the FHA. But the meltdown couldn't have happened without Washington's unexamined assumption that homeownership would transform the lives of low-income buyers in positive ways. "The program could not work because it tried to solve a problem of wealth creation through debt creation," Harvard historian Louis Hyman recently observed, aptly comparing the FHA scandals with today's subprime crisis.

The national FHA scandal should have awoken Washington to the dangers of its homeownership-promotion efforts. Instead, the government simply changed its sights. Just as it had pushed the FHA to insure loans in poor neighborhoods, it now began pushing private banks to lend more in those neighborhoods. The new campaign lasted 30 years, but the outcome was—yet again—foreclosures on a massive scale. The main difference, as we know all too well, was that the foreclosures helped usher in a global financial crisis.

This time, the government's spur to action was claims by housing and civil rights activists that banks were "redlining"—intentionally not lending in minority neighborhoods. In April 1975, a new group of activists, the National People's Action on Housing, brought the concept to a national audience at a Chicago conference. Over the next few years, a series of studies by advocacy groups and local newspapers purported to prove that redlining was real. Black neighborhoods, the studies showed, received far fewer mortgages than mostly white areas did, and black applicants had their loans shot down more often than whites with similar incomes. Banks and academic experts responded that the studies didn't include information about the creditworthiness of borrowers in black neighborhoods, a more important factor than income. Nevertheless, the media worked themselves into a frenzy, pillorying government officials who dared object to the studies' conclusions.

Congress passed a bill in 1975 requiring banks to provide the government with information on their lending activities in poor urban areas. Two years later, it passed the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), which gave regulators the power to deny banks the right to expand if they didn't lend sufficiently in those neighborhoods. In 1979, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) rocked the banking industry when it used the CRA to turn down an application by the Greater New York Savings Bank to open a branch on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. The government contended that the bank didn't lend enough in Brooklyn, its home market.

Bankers recognized that a fundamental shift in regulation was taking place. Previously, the government had simply made sure that banks' practices were safe and that depositors' funds were protected. Now, it would use its power over banks to shape their lending strategies. Soon after the Greater New York ruling, for instance, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board told a Toledo, Ohio, bank that it had to eliminate its practice of lending only to its current customers during times when funds were tight; the maneuver might be discriminatory. The FHLBB also cast a dubious eye on other bank actions to tighten credit in a downturn, such as raising the minimum down payment on mortgages.

Other actions by federal regulators sent similar messages. In 1980, the FDIC told a Maryland bank that it couldn't expand unless it started lending in the District of Columbia, even though the bank had no branches there. Soon, the government was instructing wholesale banks—institutions that have no branches and typically don't lend to consumers at all—that they, too, had to pursue inner-city lending programs.

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The next stop on the road to 2008 was a fateful campaign to lower lending criteria, which, the housing advocates argued, were racist and had to change. The campaign began in 1986, when the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (Acorn) threatened to oppose an acquisition by a southern bank, Louisiana Bancshares, until it agreed to new "flexible credit and underwriting standards" for minority borrowers—for example, counting public assistance and food stamps as income. The next year, Acorn led a coalition of advocacy groups calling for industry-wide changes in lending standards. Among the demanded reforms were the easing of minimum down-payment requirements and of the requirement that borrowers have enough cash at a closing to cover two to three months of mortgage payments (research had shown that lack of money in hand was a big reason some mortgages failed quickly).

"Soon, the government was instructing wholesale banks that they, too, had to pursue inner-city lending programs."

The advocates also attacked Fannie Mae, the giant quasi-government agency that bought loans from banks in order to allow them to make new loans. Its underwriters were "strictly by-the-book interpreters" of lending standards and turned down purchases of unconventional loans, charged Acorn. The pressure eventually paid off. In 1992, Congress passed legislation requiring Fannie Mae and the similar Freddie Mac to devote 30 percent of their loan purchases to mortgages for low- and moderate-income borrowers.

The campaign gained further traction with the election of Bill Clinton, whose housing secretary, Henry Cisneros, declared that he would expand homeownership among lower- and lower-middle-income renters. His strategy: pushing for no-down-payment loans; expanding the size of mortgages that the government would insure against losses; and using the CRA and other lending laws to direct more private money into low-income programs. Shortly after Cisneros announced his plan, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac agreed to begin buying loans under new, looser guidelines. Freddie Mac, for instance, started approving low-income buyers with bad credit histories or none at all, so long as they were current on rent and utilities payments. Freddie Mac also said that it would begin counting income from seasonal jobs and public assistance toward its income minimum, despite the FHA disaster of the sixties.

To meet their goals, the two mortgage giants enlisted large lenders—including nonbanks, which weren't covered by the CRA—into the effort. Freddie Mac began an "alternative qualifying" program with the Sears Mortgage Corporation that let a borrower qualify for a loan with a monthly payment as high as 50 percent of his income, at a time when most private mortgage companies wouldn't exceed 33 percent. The program also allowed borrowers with bad credit to get mortgages if they took credit-counseling classes administered by Acorn and other nonprofits. Subsequent research would show that such classes have little impact on default rates.

Pressuring nonbank lenders to make more loans to poor minorities didn't stop with Sears. If it didn't happen, Clinton officials warned, they'd seek to extend CRA regulations to *all* mortgage makers. In Congress, Representative Maxine Waters called financial firms not covered by the CRA "among the most egregious redliners." To rebuff the criticism, the Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA) shocked the financial world by signing a 1994 agreement with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), pledging to increase lending to minorities and join in new efforts to rewrite lending standards. The first MBA member to sign up: Countrywide Financial, the mortgage firm that would be at the core of the subprime meltdown.

As the volume of lending to low-income borrowers increased, the loans became big

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business. And slowly, the industry began pitching the loans with the same language that the government and activists had long used, and promoting the same debased lending standards. A 1998 sales pitch by a Bear Stearns managing director advised banks to begin packaging their loans to low-income borrowers into securities that the firm could sell, according to Stan Liebowitz, a professor of economics at the University of Texas who unearthed the pitch. Forget traditional underwriting standards when considering these loans, the director advised. For a low-income borrower, he continued in all-too-familiar terms, owning a home was "a near-sacred obligation. A family will do almost anything to meet that monthly mortgage payment." Bunk, says Liebowitz: "The claim that lower-income homeowners are somehow different in their devotion to their home is a purely emotional claim with no evidence to support it."

By the late 1990s, lenders, keen to find new markets to tap, had jumped completely on board the low-income-mortgage bandwagon. In 1997, homeownership had reached a then-high of 66 percent of households. By definition, that meant that many, even most, creditworthy households had already made the plunge. The biggest opportunities for new business thus seemed to be lower-income borrowers. "We believe that low-income borrowers are going to be our leading customers going into the 21st century," an executive for Norwest Mortgage, a Maryland lender, told the trade press in 1998. With Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac footing some of the bill, "banks are buying these loans from us as fast as we can originate them."

Any concern that regulators should tighten standards as the loan volume expanded was quickly dismissed. When in early 2000 the FDIC proposed increasing capital requirements for lenders making "subprime" loans—loans to people with questionable credit, that is—Democratic representative Carolyn Maloney of New York told a congressional hearing that she feared that the step would dry up CRA loans. Her fellow New York Democrat John J. LaFalce urged regulators "not to be premature" in imposing new regulations.

And even with lenders now chasing this market enthusiastically, the Clinton administration kept pushing for higher government-mandated goals. In July 1999, HUD proposed new levels for Fannie Mae's and Freddie Mac's low-income lending; in September, Fannie Mae agreed to begin purchasing loans made to "borrowers with slightly impaired credit"—that is, with credit standards even lower than the government had been pushing for a generation.

Congress later took up where Clinton left off. Not content that nearly seven in ten American households owned their own homes, legislators in 2004 pressed new affordable-housing goals on the two mortgage giants, which through 2007 purchased some $1 trillion in loans to lower- and moderate-income buyers. The buying spree helped spark a massive increase in securitization of mortgages to people with dubious credit. To carry out this mission, Fannie Mae turned to old friends, like Angelo Mozilo of Countrywide, which became the biggest supplier of mortgages to low-income buyers for Fannie Mae to purchase.

Executives at these firms won hosannas. Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies invited Mozilo to give its prestigious 2003 Dunlop Lecture. Subject: "The American Dream of Homeownership: From Cliché to Mission." *La Opinión*, a Spanish-language newspaper, dubbed Countrywide its Corporation of the Year. Meantime, in Congress, Waters praised the "outstanding leadership" of Fannie Mae chairman Franklin Raines.

JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

There was never any shortage of evidence that the new loans were much riskier than conventional mortgages. In October 1994, Fannie Mae head James Johnson had reminded a banking convention that mortgages with small down payments had a much higher risk of defaulting. (A Duff & Phelps study found that they were nearly three times more likely to default than conventional mortgages.) Yet the very next month, Fannie Mae said that it expected to back loans to low-income home buyers with a 97 percent loan-to-value ratio—that is, loans in which the buyer puts down just 3 percent—as part of

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Lax lending standards encouraged by the government contributed to our current foreclosure crisis.

a commitment, made earlier that year to Congress, to purchase $1 trillion in affordable-housing mortgages by the end of the nineties. According to Edward Pinto, who served as the company's chief credit officer, the program was the result of political pressure on Fannie Mae trumping lending standards.

An Atlanta-area minority loan program, crafted hastily after a newspaper redlining exposé, provided further evidence. The program lent more than half of its mortgages to single women with children, including women on public assistance, some of whom took on payments of up to 50 percent of their monthly income. Within a year, 10 percent of the loans had gone delinquent and the homeowners were sinking deeper into other kinds of debt. Yet the program's woes received little publicity. Community groups argued that the difficulties were all the fault of the banks, which should have offered the loans with lower interest rates.

What made it easier to dismiss such ominous failures was that some of the nation's most prestigious financial regulators and researchers, including the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, got behind the movement to loosen lending

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standards. In 1992, the Boston Fed produced an extraordinary 29-page document that codified the new lending wisdom. Conventional mortgage criteria, the report argued, might be "unintentionally biased" because they didn't take into account "the economic culture of urban, lower-income and nontraditional customers." Lenders should thus consider junking the industry's traditional income-to-payments ratio and stop viewing an applicant's "lack of credit history" as a "negative factor." Further, if applicants had bad credit, banks should "consider extenuating circumstances"—even though a study by mortgage insurance companies would soon show, not surprisingly, that borrowers with no credit rating or a bad one were far more likely to default. If applicants didn't have enough savings for a down payment, the Boston Fed urged, banks should allow loans from nonprofits or government assistance agencies to count toward one. A later study of Freddie Mac mortgages would find that a borrower who made a down payment with third-party funds was four times more likely to default, a reminder that traditional underwriting standards weren't arbitrary but based on historical lending patterns.

Another reason government kept up the pressure was that no matter how high ownership rates climbed, there was always a group below the norm that needed help. The country's substantial immigration rates in the 1990s and early 2000s, for instance, produced a whole new cadre of potential Latino borrowers. To serve them, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus launched Hogar, an initiative that pushed for easing lending standards for immigrants, including touting so-called seller-financed mortgages in which a builder provided down-payment aid to buyers via contributions to nonprofit groups. As a result, mortgage lending to Hispanics soared. And today, in districts where Hispanics make up at least 25 percent of the population, foreclosure rates are now nearly 50 percent higher than the national average, according to a *Wall Street Journal* analysis.

Washington's, indeed America's, housing obsession—decades of government and advocacy-group efforts to water down underwriting standards, private mortgage makers' desire to find new pools of customers as homeownership rates rose, and the rapid growth of securitization of risky loans—carried a steep cost. When the Federal Reserve added low interest rates and plenty of financial liquidity to the mix, the housing boom became a bubble. And then, as everyone knows, the bubble burst in 2008, leading to economic disaster.

Last year, lenders began foreclosure proceedings on some 2.3 million homes, and some experts have predicted that when the current financial crisis has ended, some 8 million homes will have wound up in foreclosure. Though lenders made risky loans to borrowers across the income spectrum, many of the failing mortgages today are in lower- and lower-middle-income neighborhoods. A Federal Reserve Bank of New York study of foreclosures in New Jersey, the state in its region hit hardest by the mortgage collapse, reveals that zip codes with the worst rates are mostly in areas where household income was "concentrated at the lower end of the household income range."

Yet before we've even worked our way through this crisis, elected officials and policymakers are busy readying the next. Barney Frank, the Massachusetts congressman who serves as chair of the House Financial Services Committee, has balked at proposals to privatize Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which would eliminate their risk to taxpayers and their susceptibility to political machinations. Why? Simple: the government uses them to subsidize the affordable-housing programs that Frank supports. California congressman Joe Baca, head of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, also opposes reining in affordable housing lending. "We need to keep credit easily accessible to our minority communities," he asserts. Republicans and Democrats, meanwhile, have scrambled to reignite the housing market through ill-conceived tax credits and renewed federal subsidies for mortgages, including the Obama administration's mortgage bailout plan, which recalls the New Deal's HOLC. As Harvard economist and *City Journal* contributing editor Edward Glaeser has observed, mortgage lenders have finally "recovered their

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sanity"—only to have government dangling subsidized low interest rates and tax credits in front of them and their potential customers all over again. Behind these efforts is a fundamental misconception among politicians that housing drives the American economy and therefore demands subsidy at virtually any cost.

Changing notions of fairness and equity also cloud policymakers' minds. Our praiseworthy initial efforts—to eliminate housing discrimination and provide all Americans an equal *opportunity* to buy a home—were eventually turned on their heads by advocates and politicians, who instead tried to ensure equality of *outcomes*. And so, for instance, when elected officials learned that under 50 percent of Hispanic households in America owned homes, Latino politicians sponsored a campaign to raise ownership. Yet the lower rate was perfectly understandable, given the lower educational levels, lower household incomes, and shorter tenure in the country of Latinos, compared with the average American household.

"Our experience since the Depression teaches us that a rising economy is the best way to boost homeownership."

What principles, then, should govern federal policy toward homeownership and the housing construction market? First, our experience since the Great Depression teaches us that a rising economy is the best and safest way to boost homeownership. By some estimates, the "natural" rate of homeownership in America, without dicey government-enabled mortgages, would still be nearly 65 percent—among the highest rates in the world. Government's most important role in the market should be to ensure a sturdy economy and a reliable judicial system that protects the interests of buyers and sellers in what is the largest transaction that most will ever undertake.

At the same time, government should do no harm, especially when it comes to the cost of housing. One reason politicians and policymakers continue to feel that they must subsidize mortgage rates and launch ownership campaigns is that since the 1970s, local housing and zoning regulations have raised the price of home construction—sometimes by hundreds of thousands of dollars, as economist Randall O'Toole has shown—and thereby reduced the supply of affordable housing. Half a century ago, America's cities boasted a rich stock of affordable housing, even as their populations grew. Today, even shrinking cities often complain of a lack of it. One solution is for the federal government to tie aid to states to local regulatory reforms that reduce the cost of construction and encourage additional building.

The federal government should also consider eliminating or capping the home-mortgage tax deduction, which drives up the price of housing in ways particularly damaging to lower- and moderate-income buyers. Enshrined in our tax code since 1913, the deduction provides more disposable income to homeowners who itemize their taxes—mostly upper- and upper-middle-income buyers—who can use that money on bigger mortgages, increasing the price of housing. But many moderate-income households don't itemize and thus don't benefit from the tax break, and they're left with fewer housing options as the cost of homes rises around them. In their study *Rethinking Federal Housing Policy*, Harvard's Glaeser and Joseph Gyourko of the Wharton School of Business suggest capping the deduction at $300,000 of mortgage debt. That way, it would still benefit those moderate-income families that do itemize, while ending the exemption for others.

Ultimately, the goal should be to end subsidies that amount to a government project to direct homeownership to places where Washington believes it should be taking place. That kind of political meddling in this vast marketplace has wreaked havoc time and again, and will continue to do so—if we keep letting it.

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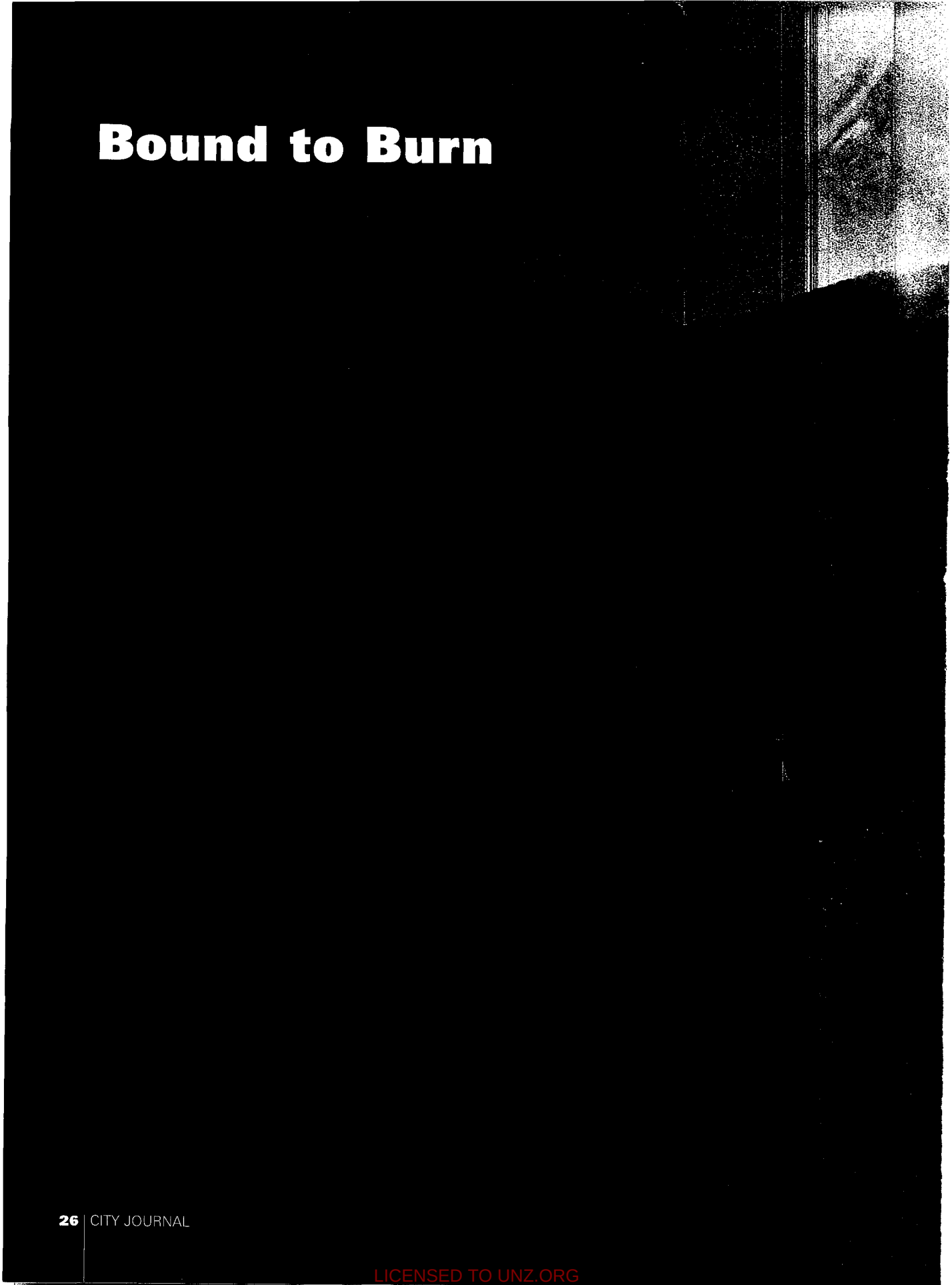
Bound to Burn



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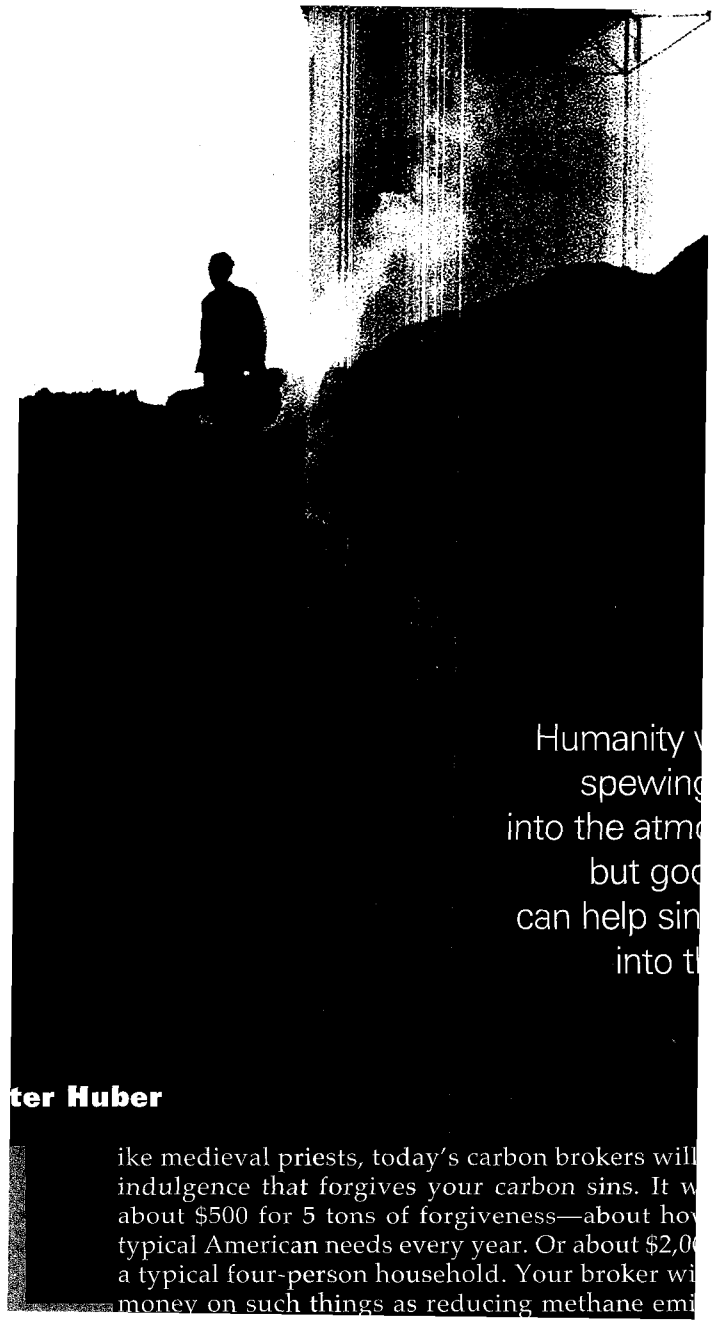

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ike medieval priests, today's carbon brokers will
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money on such things as reducing methane emi

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would bankrupt the coal industry. No one can doubt Washington's power to bankrupt almost anything—in the United States. But China is adding 100 gigawatts of coal-fired electrical capacity a year. That's another whole United States' worth of coal consumption added every three years, with no stopping point in sight. Much of the rest of the developing world is on a similar path.

Cut to the chase. We rich people can't stop the world's 5 billion poor people from burning the couple of trillion tons of cheap carbon that they have within easy reach. We can't even make any durable dent in global emissions—because emissions from the developing world are growing too fast, because the other 80 percent of humanity desperately needs cheap energy, and because we and they are now part of the same global economy. What we can do, if we're foolish enough, is let carbon worries send our jobs and industries to their shores, making them grow even faster, and their carbon emissions faster still.

We don't control the global supply of carbon. Ten countries ruled by nasty people control 80 percent of the planet's oil reserves—about 1 trillion barrels, currently worth about $40 trillion. If $40 trillion worth of gold were located where most of the oil is, one could only scoff at any suggestion that we might somehow persuade the nasty people to leave the wealth buried. They can lift most of their oil at a cost well under $10 a barrel. They will drill. They will pump. And they will find buyers. Oil is all they've got.

Poor countries all around the planet are sitting on a second, even bigger source of carbon—almost a trillion tons of cheap, easily accessible coal. They also control most of the planet's third great carbon reservoir—the rain forests and soil. They will keep squeezing the carbon out of cheap coal, and cheap forest, and cheap soil, because that's all they've got. Unless they can find something even cheaper. But they won't—not any time in the foreseeable future.

We no longer control the demand for carbon, either. The 5 billion poor—the other 80 percent—are already the main problem, not us. Collectively, they emit 20 percent more greenhouse gas than we do. We burn a lot more carbon individually, but they have a lot more children. Their fecundity has eclipsed our gluttony, and the gap is now widening fast. China, not the United States, is now the planet's largest emitter. Brazil, India, Indonesia, South Africa, and others are in hot pursuit. And these countries have all made it clear that they aren't interested in spending what money they have on low-carb diets. It is idle to argue, as some have done, that global warming can be solved—decades hence—at a cost of 1 to 2 percent of the global economy. Eighty percent of the global population hasn't signed on to pay more than 0 percent.

Accepting this last, self-evident fact, the Kyoto Protocol divides the world into two groups. The roughly 1.2 billion citizens of industrialized countries are expected to reduce their emissions. The other 5 billion—including both China and India, each of which is about as populous as the entire Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—aren't. These numbers alone guarantee that humanity isn't going to reduce global emissions at any point in the foreseeable future—unless it does it the old-fashioned way, by getting poorer. But the current recession won't last forever, and the long-term trend is clear. Their populations and per-capita emissions are rising far faster than ours could fall under any remotely plausible carbon-reduction scheme.

Might we simply buy their cooperation? Various plans have circulated for having the rich pay the poor to stop burning down rain forests and to lower greenhouse-gas emissions from primitive agricultural practices. But taking control of what belongs to someone else ultimately means buying it. Over the long term, we would in effect have to buy up a large fraction of all the world's forests, soil, coal, and oil—and then post guards to make sure that poor people didn't sneak in and grab all the carbon anyway. Buying off people just doesn't fly when they outnumber you four to one.

Might we instead manage to give the world something cheaper than carbon? The moon-shot law of economics says yes, of course we can. If

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we just put our minds to it, it will happen. Atom bomb, moon landing, ultracheap energy—all it takes is a triumph of political will.

Really? For the very poorest, this would mean beating the price of the free rain forest that they burn down to clear land to plant a subsistence crop. For the slightly less poor, it would mean beating the price of coal used to generate electricity at under 3 cents per kilowatt-hour.

And with one important exception, which we will return to shortly, no carbon-free fuel or technology comes remotely close to being able to do that. Fossil fuels are extremely cheap because geological forces happen to have created large deposits of these dense forms of energy in accessible places. Find a mountain of coal, and you can just shovel gargantuan amounts of energy into the boxcars.

"One windmill generates a piddling 2 to 3 megawatts. Google is building 100-megawatt server farms."

Shoveling wind and sun is much, much harder. Windmills are now 50-story skyscrapers. Yet one windmill generates a piddling 2 to 3 megawatts. A jumbo jet needs 100 megawatts to get off the ground; Google is building 100-megawatt server farms. Meeting New York City's total energy demand would require 13,000 of those skyscrapers spinning at top speed, which would require scattering about 50,000 of them across the state, to make sure that you always hit enough windy spots. To answer the howls of green protest that inevitably greet realistic engineering estimates like these, note that real-world systems must be able to meet peak, not average, demand; that reserve margins are essential; and that converting electric power into liquid or gaseous fuels to power the existing transportation and heating systems would entail substantial losses. What was Mayor Bloomberg thinking when he suggested that he might just tuck windmills into Manhattan? Such thoughts betray a deep ignorance about how difficult it is to get a lot of energy out of sources as thin and dilute as wind and sun.

It's often suggested that technology improvements and mass production will sharply lower the cost of wind and solar. But engineers have pursued these technologies for decades, and while costs of some components have fallen, there is no serious prospect of costs plummeting and performance soaring as they have in our laptops and cell phones. When you replace conventional with renewable energy, everything gets bigger, not smaller—and bigger costs more, not less. Even if solar cells themselves were free, solar power would remain very expensive because of the huge structures and support systems required to extract large amounts of electricity from a source so weak that it takes hours to deliver a tan.

This is why the (few) greens ready to accept engineering and economic reality have suddenly emerged as avid proponents of nuclear power. In the aftermath of the Three Mile Island accident—which didn't harm anyone, and wouldn't even have damaged the reactor core if the operators had simply kept their hands off the switches and let the automatic safety systems do their job—ostensibly green antinuclear activists unwittingly boosted U.S. coal consumption by about 400 million tons per year. The United States would be in compliance with the Kyoto Protocol today if we could simply undo their handiwork and conjure back into existence the nuclear plants that were in the pipeline in nuclear power's heyday. Nuclear power is fantastically compact, and—as America's nuclear navy, several commercial U.S. operators, France, Japan, and a handful of other countries have convincingly established—it's both safe and cheap wherever engineers are allowed to get on with it.

But getting on with it briskly is essential, because costs hinge on the huge, up-front capital investment in the power plant. Years of delay between the capital investment and when it starts earning a return are ruinous. Most of the developed world has made nuclear power unaffordable by surrounding it with a regulatory process so sluggish and unpredictable that no

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one will pour a couple of billion dollars into a new plant, for the good reason that no one knows when (or even if) the investment will be allowed to start making money.

And countries that don't trust nuclear power on their own soil must hesitate to share the technology with countries where you never know who will be in charge next year, or what he might decide to do with his nuclear toys. So much for the possibility that cheap nuclear power might replace carbon-spewing sources of energy in the developing world. Moreover, even India and China, which have mastered nuclear technologies, are deploying far more new coal capacity.

Remember, finally, that most of the cost of carbon-based energy resides not in the fuels but in the gigantic infrastructure of furnaces, turbines, and engines. Those costs are sunk, which means that carbon-free alternatives—with their own huge, attendant, front-end capital costs—must be cheap enough to beat carbon fuels that already have their infrastructure in place. That won't happen in our lifetimes.

Another argument commonly advanced is that getting over carbon will, nevertheless, be comparatively cheap, because it will get us over oil, too—which will impoverish our enemies and save us a bundle at the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security. But uranium aside, the most economical substitute for oil is, in fact, electricity generated with coal. Cheap coal-fired electricity has been, is, and will continue to be a substitute for oil, or a substitute for natural gas, which can in turn substitute for oil. By sharply boosting the cost of coal electricity, the war on carbon will make us more dependent on oil, not less.

The first place where coal displaces oil is in the electric power plant itself. When oil prices spiked in the early 1980s, U.S. utilities quickly switched to other fuels, with coal leading the pack; the coal-fired plants now being built in China, India, and other developing countries are displacing diesel generators. More power plants burning coal to produce cheap electricity can also mean less natural gas used to generate electricity. And less used for industrial, commercial, and residential heating, welding, and chemical processing, as these users switch to electrically powered alternatives. The gas that's freed up this way can then substitute for diesel fuel in heavy trucks, delivery vehicles, and buses. And coal-fired electricity will eventually begin displacing gasoline, too, as soon as plug-in hybrid cars start recharging their batteries directly from the grid.

To top it all, using electricity generated in large part by coal to power our passenger cars would lower carbon emissions—even in Indiana, which generates 75 percent of its electricity with coal. Big power plants are so much more efficient than the gasoline engines in our cars that a plug-in hybrid car running on electricity supplied by Indiana's current grid still ends up more carbon-frugal than comparable cars burning gasoline in a conventional engine under the hood. Old-guard energy types have been saying this for decades. In a major report released last March, the World Wildlife Fund finally concluded that they were right all along.

But true carbon zealots won't settle for modest reductions in carbon emissions when fat targets beckon. They see coal-fired electricity as the dragon to slay first. Huge, stationary sources can't run or hide, and the cost of doing without them doesn't get rung up in plain view at the gas pump. California, Pennsylvania, and other greener-than-thou states have made flatlining electricity consumption the linchpin of their war on carbon. That is the one certain way to halt the displacement of foreign oil by cheap, domestic electricity.

The oil-coal economics come down to this. Per unit of energy delivered, coal costs about one-fifth as much as oil—but contains one-third more carbon. High carbon taxes (or tradable permits, or any other economic equivalent) sharply narrow the price gap between oil and the one fuel that can displace it worldwide, here and now. The oil nasties will celebrate the green war on carbon as enthusiastically as the coal industry celebrated the green war on uranium 30 years ago.

The other 5 billion are too poor to deny these economic realities. For them, the price to beat

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is 3-cent coal-fired electricity. China and India won't trade 3-cent coal for 15-cent wind or 30-cent solar. As for us, if we embrace those economically frivolous alternatives on our own, we will certainly end up doing more harm than good.

By pouring money into anything-but-carbon fuels, we will lower demand for carbon, making it even cheaper for the rest of the world to buy and burn. The rest will use cheaper energy to accelerate their own economic growth. Jobs will go where energy is cheap, just as they go where labor is cheap. Manufacturing and heavy industry require a great deal of energy, and in a global economy, no competitor can survive while paying substantially more for an essential input. The carbon police acknowledge the problem and talk vaguely of using tariffs and such to address it. But carbon is far too deeply embedded in the global economy, and materials, goods, and services move and intermingle far too freely, for the customs agents to track.

"'Green jobs' means Americans paying other Americans to chase carbon while the rest of the world builds new factories."

Consider your next Google search. As noted in a recent article in *Harper's*, "Google . . . and its rivals now head abroad for cheaper, often dirtier power." Google itself (the "don't be evil" company) is looking to set up one of its electrically voracious server farms at a site in Lithuania, "disingenuously described as being near a hydroelectric dam." But Lithuania's grid is 0.5 percent hydroelectric and 78 percent nuclear. Perhaps the company's next huge farm will be "near" the Three Gorges Dam in China, built to generate over three times as much power as our own Grand Coulee Dam in Washington State. China will be happy to play along, while it quietly plugs another coal plant into its grid a few pylons down the line. All the while, of course, Google will maintain its low-energy headquarters in California, a state that often boasts of the wise regulatory policies—centered, one is told, on efficiency and conservation—that have made it such a frugal energy user. But in fact, sky-high prices have played the key role, curbing internal demand and propelling the flight from California of power plants, heavy industries, chip fabs, server farms, and much else (see "California's Potemkin Environmentalism," Spring 2008).

So the suggestion that we can lift ourselves out of the economic doldrums by spending lavishly on exceptionally expensive new sources of energy is absurd. "Green jobs" means Americans paying other Americans to chase carbon while the rest of the world builds new power plants and factories. And the environmental consequences of outsourcing jobs, industries, and carbon to developing countries are beyond dispute. They use energy far less efficiently than we do, and they remain almost completely oblivious to environmental impacts, just as we were in our own first century of industrialization. A massive transfer of carbon, industry, and jobs from us to them will raise carbon emissions, not lower them.

The grand theory for how the developed world can unilaterally save the planet seems to run like this. We buy time for the planet by rapidly slashing our own emissions. We do so by developing carbon-free alternatives even cheaper than carbon. The rest of the world will then quickly adopt these alternatives, leaving most of its trillion barrels of oil and trillion tons of coal safely buried, most of the rain forests standing, and most of the planet's carbon-rich soil undisturbed. From end to end, however, this vision strains credulity.

Perhaps it's the recognition of that inconvenient truth that has made the anti-carbon rhetoric increasingly apocalyptic. Coal trains have been analogized to boxcars headed for Auschwitz. There is talk of the extinction of all humanity. But then, we have heard such things before. It is indeed quite routine, in environmental discourse,

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to frame choices as involving potentially infinite costs on the green side of the ledger. If they really are infinite, no reasonable person can quibble about spending mere billions, or even trillions, on the dollar side, to dodge the apocalyptic bullet.

Thirty years ago, the case against nuclear power was framed as the "Zero-Infinity Dilemma." The risks of a meltdown might be vanishingly small, but if it happened, the costs would be infinitely large, so we should forget about uranium. Computer models demonstrated that meltdowns were highly unlikely and that the costs of a meltdown, should one occur, would be manageable—but greens scoffed: huge computer models couldn't be trusted. So we ended up burning much more coal. The software shoe is on the other foot now; the machines that said nukes wouldn't melt now say that the ice caps will. Warming skeptics scoff in turn, and can quite plausibly argue that a planet is harder to model than a nuclear reactor. But that's a detail. From a rhetorical perspective, any claim that the infinite, the apocalypse, or the Almighty supports your side of the argument shuts down all further discussion.

To judge by actions rather than words, however, few people and almost no national governments actually believe in the infinite rewards of exorcising carbon from economic life. Kyoto has hurt the anti-carbon mission far more than carbon zealots seem to grasp. It has proved only that with carbon, governments will say and sign anything—and then do less than nothing. The United States should steer well clear of such treaties because they are unenforceable, routinely ignored, and therefore worthless.

If we're truly worried about carbon, we must instead approach it as if the emissions originated in an annual eruption of Mount Krakatoa. Don't try to persuade the volcano to sign a treaty promising to stop. Focus instead on what might be done to protect and promote the planet's carbon sinks—the systems that suck carbon back out of the air and bury it. Green plants currently pump 15 to 20 times as much carbon out of the atmosphere as humanity releases into it—that's the pump that put all that carbon underground in the first place, millions of years ago. At present, almost all of that plant-captured carbon is released back into the atmosphere within a year or so by animal consumers. North America, however, is currently sinking almost two-thirds of its carbon emissions back into prairies and forests that were originally leveled in the 1800s but are now recovering. For the next 50 years or so, we should focus on promoting better land use and reforestation worldwide. Beyond that, weather and the oceans naturally sink about one-fifth of total fossil-fuel emissions. We should also investigate large-scale options for accelerating the process of ocean sequestration.

Carbon zealots despise carbon-sinking schemes because, they insist, nobody can be sure that the sunk carbon will stay sunk. Yet everything they propose hinges on the assumption that carbon already sunk by nature in what are now hugely valuable deposits of oil and coal can be kept sunk by treaty and imaginary cheaper-than-carbon alternatives. This, yet again, gets things backward. We certainly know how to improve agriculture to protect soil, and how to grow new trees, and how to maintain existing forests, and we can almost certainly learn how to mummify carbon and bury it back in the earth or the depths of the oceans, in ways that neither man nor nature will disturb. It's keeping nature's black gold sequestered from humanity that's impossible.

If we do need to do something serious about carbon, the sequestration of carbon after it's burned is the one approach that accepts the growth of carbon emissions as an inescapable fact of the twenty-first century. And it's the one approach that the rest of the world can embrace, too, here and now, because it begins with improving land use, which can lead directly and quickly to greater prosperity. If, on the other hand, we persist in building green bridges to nowhere, we will make things worse, not better. Good intentions aren't enough. Turned into ineffectual action, they can cost the earth and accelerate its ruin at the same time.

Green plants pump 15 to 20 times as much carbon out of the atmosphere as humanity releases into it.

MITSU YASUKAWA/STAR LEDGER/CORBIS

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The Dark Figure of British Crime

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SIMON WHEATLEY/MAGNUM PHOTOS

Despite government reassurances, Britons feel under siege—with good reason.

Claire Berlinski

Just before midnight on January 12, 2006, Tom ap Rhys Pryce, a 31-year-old lawyer, left a London party and telephoned his fiancée to say that he was on his way home. He emerged from the tube station at Kensal Green about 20 minutes later and began walking toward their apartment. That was when two teenage gang members attacked him. Donnel Carty kicked Pryce in the back, sending him flying to the ground, and Delano Brown kicked him in the face. When Pryce tried to defend himself, the attackers stabbed him in the legs, hands, face, and heart. Then they took his cell phone and public-transportation pass, the only valuables in his possession, and ran off, leaving him dying on the ground. The paramedics who strove unsuccessfully to revive him found his wedding vows strewn on the pavement.

Rising youth crime, which official statistics haven't even measured, has contributed to public fear.

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The British press, particularly the tabloid press, carries stories like this nearly every day—lurid accounts of drunken vandals, teenage murderers, child abuse, knifings, and gang violence. "After bingeing on lager, vodka and cocaine, twisted Jobson launched a frenzied attack, stabbing Samantha TEN times with an eight-inch blade," the *Sun* reported this past November 26. DRUNKEN YOB WHO LEFT TEENAGER WITH PART OF HIS SKULL MISSING AFTER PARTY ATTACK GETS JUST ONE YEAR'S DETENTION, cried the *Daily Mail* on the same day—about a different incident. Collectively, these reports paint a portrait of a nation terrorized by vomit-spewing, tattooed thugs. And according to polls, British citizens also consider crime an exceedingly grave problem.

But here the British government is strikingly at odds with both the press and popular opinion. Supported by Britain's most prominent criminologists, the government insists that the country has, in fact, been experiencing the longest period of *falling* crime since record-keeping began. Indeed, it says, the rapid and sustained rise in crime that began in Britain in the late 1950s has been entirely reversed: crime reached a peak in 1995 but has since dropped by 48 percent. Home Secretary Jacqui Smith has declared herself "extremely pleased" by the dramatic improvement in public safety.

Someone in this story is wrong. But who? Have the British people succumbed to mass hysteria? Or is the government's methodology flawed?

One shouldn't discount the possibility of mass hysteria. Such things happen. At various points in history, large numbers of people have convinced themselves that they faced a witchcraft epidemic, a Martian invasion, or a high risk of date rape on an American college campus (see "The Campus Rape Myth," Winter 2008).

Defenders of Britain's official statistics commonly say that public worry about crime constitutes just this kind of hysteria—and that it's the media's fault. "Great lies, bold, bare-faced and unapologetic, are relayed every day by every orifice of the media in ways that would make Kim Jong-il proud," writes *Guardian* columnist Polly Toynbee. In her view, the press is peddling these lies to discredit the Labour Party, in power since 1997, and to boost the fortunes of the Tories. But the idea of a media conspiracy is inconsistent with the evidence: Technicolor headlines are by no means confined to the anti-Labour press. Toynbee's own Labour-boosting newspaper, for example, regularly relays from its own august orifices such headlines as: I WAS DRUNK. THE BLADE WENT STRAIGHT INTO HIS EYEBALL.

Government officials are generally too sober to peddle such conspiracy theories but tend nonetheless to blame the press for the public's alarm. Crime sells papers, they say. But any journalist knows what's wrong with this argument. You cannot sell a story that no one will believe. If stories of crime seemed radically unconfirmed by anything in readers' experience, no newspaper could print them, over and over and over, and hope to stay in business. Even if I could find the odd sad-eyed, swollen-bellied, malnourished American child, I couldn't make a living by writing story after story warning that Americans are eating too little. So why would the media be able to generate hysteria about rising crime when, if the government is right, the rising British crime rate is as mythical as the American malnourishment crisis?

Another standard explanation for Britons' crime worries looks not to the media but to psychology. As criminologist Richard Garside puts it: "It is a criminological commonplace that crime anxieties are in truth anxieties about a broader range of issues, from whether you can trust your neighbors to whether your children will get ahead in life; from whether your job is secure to whether you'll be stuck next to a leering sexist on the 7.32 AM out of Basingstoke." This may be a criminological commonplace, but it is not a self-evident truth. No reasonably perceptive observer of human nature would deny that people often displace their anxieties—but generally, they displace them for a reason. It seems rash to embrace Garside's conclusion unless we are sure that the government's crime figures are robust.

But it is hard to be sure, for here is another, less advertised, criminological commonplace: criminologists do not know how to calculate the crime rate with precision.

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The problem was first described in the 1830s by Adolphe Quetelet, a Belgian mathematician and sociologist and the founder of modern scientific statistics. The real crime rate, which he called the "dark figure of crime," could not be revealed by official statistics, he argued: "Our observations can only refer to a certain number of known and tried offenders out of the unknown sum total of crimes committed. Since this sum total of crimes committed will probably ever continue unknown, all the reasoning of which it is the basis will be more or less defective." The problem has plagued criminology for nearly two centuries.

To understand why the dark figure of crime escapes exact measurement, realize that for a crime to be officially recorded, three things must happen: someone must be aware that a crime has been committed; someone must report that crime; and the police must accept that a law has been violated. But each link in the chain is easily broken. People may be unaware that a crime has been committed because they view it as normal or trivial behavior: in some neighborhoods, it would seem perfectly natural to settle a dispute with a good brawl, while in others, this would be seen as assault. Other crimes may go unrecognized because the victims are unaware that they have been victimized—either because of the nature of the crime, such as fraud, or because the victims are drunk, mentally ill, or otherwise incapable of understanding what has happened.

Even when victims recognize that a crime has been committed, they may not report it. Think of children, or of immigrants who don't speak the language well enough to explain what happened to them. Rapes can go unreported because the victims are ashamed. So-called victimless crimes involving sex and drugs also go unreported, of course, because the criminals have no motivation to inform the police that they are hiring prostitutes or shooting up. Crimes can also go unreported because victims fear reprisals. Above all, crimes can go unreported because victims feel no confidence in the police and see reporting a crime as pointless.

Even if a crime is reported, it will not necessarily be added to the official statistics. The police may conclude, for example, that there is insufficient evidence to believe the report. Moreover, poorly performing police departments have an incentive to stop recording crimes: it makes them look more successful than they are. For these reasons and many more, criminologists commonly posit that the dark figure of crime is far larger than the official figure—perhaps by as much as an order of magnitude. And there is good reason to believe that in Britain, the dark figure is unusually high.

"Newspaper reports paint a portrait of a nation terrorized by vomit-spewing, tattooed thugs."

The British government derives its rosy estimates of the falling crime rate from two separate sets of statistics. The first, Police Recorded Crime, does indeed show a recent fall in the total number of crimes recorded in England and Wales—from 6.01 million in 2004 to 4.95 million in 2008. But the long-term trend is quite different. It shows just 2.69 million crimes recorded in 1980, a number that rose steadily until 1992, when it reached 5.59 million. After a decline in the nineties, it began rising again, until 2004, when it hit that all-time high of just over 6 million. While the recent drop to 4.95 million may be welcome, it is still high by anyone's standards: to find the last year that the British police recorded fewer than that, you have to go back to 1999.

Defenders of the statistics counter that changes in crime-counting rules kicked in during 1998, pushing the number of recorded crimes up. Perhaps—but that doesn't account for the even grimmer picture painted by police records of *violent* crime. Sure enough, when the rules

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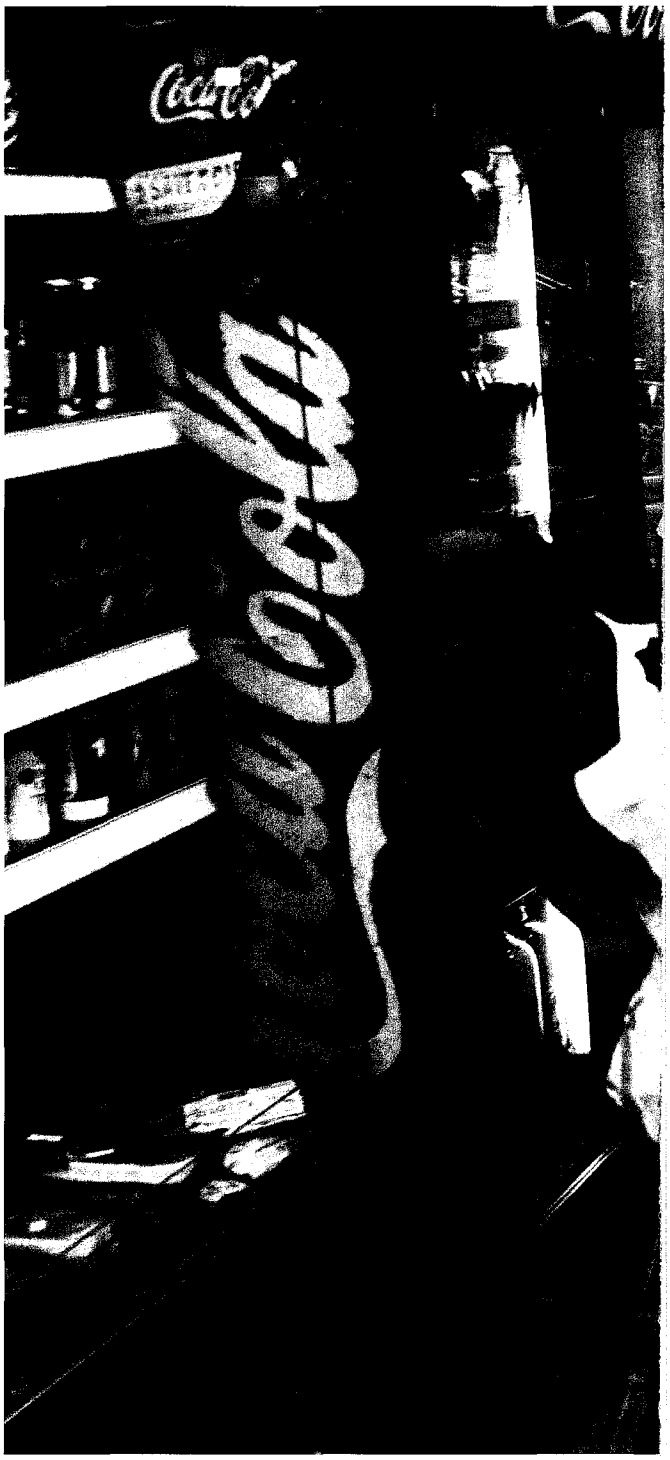
changed in 1998, the total number of violent crimes recorded jumped from 231,000 to 503,000. But then, even after the switch, it continued to rise sharply, hitting a peak of 1.06 million in 2006. That number has since declined only slightly: in 2008, the number of police-recorded violent crimes stood at 961,000. When it comes to violence, in other words, Police Recorded Crime actually confirms the public's general view.

Further, the recent decline to 4.95 million total crimes recorded could well mean that the public has lost faith in the criminal-justice system and no longer believes that reporting crimes will result in the punishment of the perpetrators. Support for this hypothesis comes from a British Federation of Small Businesses poll indicating that 60 percent of businesses in London had been victims of crime in the past year. But proprietors reported to the police only half of the burglaries, vehicle thefts, and assaults that they suffered—and not a single case of arson. They didn't think that the offenders would be caught and punished, they explained. Going to the police just wasn't worth their time.

A typical comment on the website of the *Daily Mail* makes the same point: "A few years back I saw someone slash 4 tyres on a car. I did not report it to the police. I am a female, living alone in a rather isolated location. I knew that tyre slashing would probably warrant no more than the police having a word with the perpetrator and leaving it at that, maybe a fine, while the perpetrator would most likely have taken a more robust approach to me." Another writer to the website says: "I had my car broken into in the Palmers Green area of London. I called the police to obtain a 'crime number' but was asked to call back a week later as they were inundated with such requests. When my car was broken into again the following year I didn't bother reporting it." If this attitude is widespread enough, the dark figure of crime fades to black.

Police-recorded crime statistics are an imperfect guide for another reason. Perhaps the number of muggings in a particular district really has gone



SIMON WHEATLEY/MAGNUM PHOTOS

Even when criminals are apprehended and convicted, jail time is rare, British citizens and police complain.

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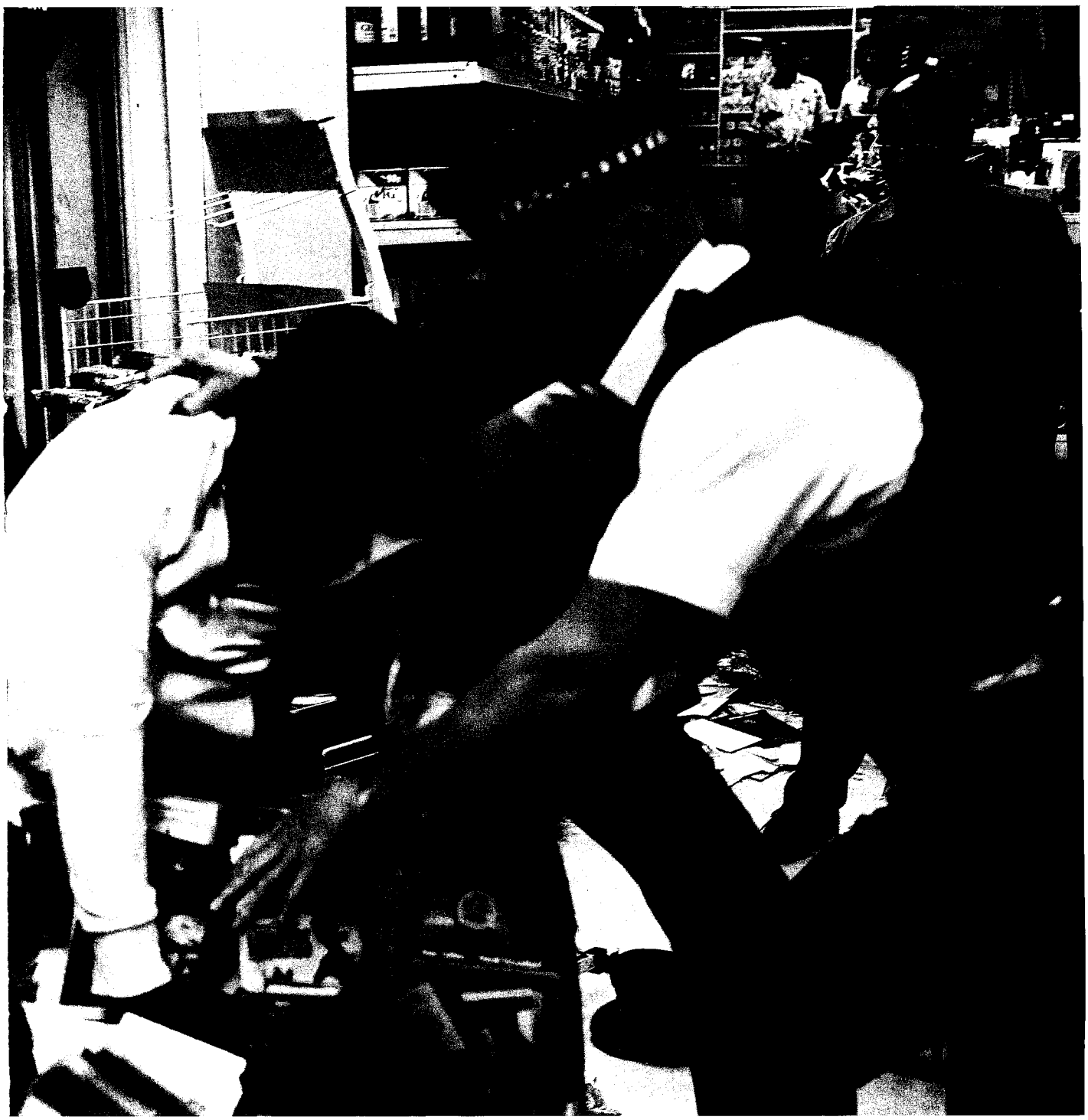

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down. But could it be because citizens no longer venture out of their homes at night for fear of being mugged? If someone needs to restrict his activities more severely and purchase more elaborate security equipment just to be as safe as he was ten years ago, his sense that crime is rising may be more significant than the bare fact that crime is falling. Even the murder rate may not be a particularly sound measure of criminality, because advances in medical technology have ensured that more victims of attempted murder survive.

Recognizing the limitations of police crime figures, governments have begun to supplement them with a second kind of statistic, the victimization survey—a poll that asks whether respondents have been the victims of crime. British government officials are fond of saying that the rigor of the British Crime Survey (BCS), an annual poll of about 50,000 homeowners in England and Wales, ensures that British crime statistics are the world's most reliable. The BCS suggests that the dark figure of crime is extremely high: last year, for example, it indicated that some 10 million crimes had been committed, far more than the police-recorded 4.95 million. Still, the government points triumphantly to the 16–18 million annual crimes that the BCS indicated in the mid-1990s. Since then, officials say, the figures have come down steadily.

But the BCS suffers from shortcomings, too. Crime sampling is a classic problem in epidemiology and resembles, in many respects, efforts to track the spread of HIV. You won't necessarily gain a useful sense of the percentage of the population that, say, shares needles by calling 100 households at random and asking whether the respondents have recently shared a needle, for the people most likely to share needles are those least likely to have a household. Similarly, victims of crime are more likely than average members of society to be poor, homeless, mentally ill, or distrustful of officious bureaucrats who call to ask complicated, intrusive questions. Indeed, those most fearful of crime are those least likely to open their doors to pollsters. Criminologist Marian Fitzgerald argues that the survey doesn't capture the extent of violent crime in Britain because of information-gathering problems: "The people who are most at risk of crime and serious violent crime are young men in inner cities. For the last decade social surveys have found it difficult to get into these areas." And even if you can locate crime victims and ask them questions, they are likelier than average members of society to lie when they answer—since they are likelier, by the mere fact of being victims, to be related to criminals or otherwise associated with them.

Note, too, that the BCS polls homeowners, not renters. This immediately skews the results by deflecting attention from poorer neighborhoods, which are the areas likely to have the highest crime rates. And the pollsters have only been sampling children under 16 since January 2009, so crimes against youths haven't been recorded. If you read the British press, you will see that youth crime is what has the public most concerned. A 2007 Freedom of Information request to Britain's police forces found that 40 percent of all muggings were committed by kids under 16, many doubtless against other children. In January 2008, the *Daily Telegraph* obtained figures from the Ministry of Justice indicating that in the three years prior, violent crime committed by youths, measured by convictions in court and the issuance of formal police warnings, had increased by 37 percent; robberies committed by youths had risen by 43 percent. Of course, a rise in convictions does not necessarily indicate a rise in crime; it may indicate instead that the government is cracking down on crime, and indeed this is how the government explains these figures. But it is suggestive that there has been no commensurate rise in adult convictions and warnings. The most plausible explanation for this is that the government has been cracking down on youth crime disproportionately because it is rising disproportionately.

Nor does the BCS poll the victims of sex crimes, drug crimes, crimes against commercial premises, or (obviously) murder. In 2003, David Green of the think tank Civitas attempted to calculate the number of crimes in some of those

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missing categories. The BCS that year estimated that about 13 million crimes had been committed, but using the Home Office's seldom-publicized estimates of police underrecording of significant crimes, Green concluded that the true number was nearly twice that.

The BCS has other weaknesses. If a respondent claims to have been the victim of a particular crime more than five times in the past year, the pollsters are instructed to enter the number as five. For instance, if a homeowner in a high-crime area reports that feral youths vandalize his property every week, his report will enter the database as five crimes, not 52. In 2007, researchers Graham Farrell and Ken Pease concluded that if one refrained from "truncating the long statistical 'tail' of victimization," the overall number of BCS crimes would be at least 3 million higher.

"A 2007 Freedom of Information request found that 40 percent of all muggings were committed by kids under 16."

Are the revised crime estimates significant? It is "true but trivial," says Mike Hough, a criminologist at King's College London who has helped design the BCS since it began in 1981, that if you include *all* crimes, "an astronomical amount of crime is committed." Surely nobody is really in a panic about petty crimes, he adds. But not all the repeat crime is petty: according to Farrell and Pease's study, if calculated correctly, violent crime would be 82 percent higher. The BCS figures, on their own terms, show substantial drops since 1995 in "acquaintance" and "domestic" violence, but "stranger" violence and muggings—the kind of violent crime that really terrifies people—remain at their extraordinarily high mid-nineties levels.

And an astronomical number of petty crimes is far from a trivial problem. As New Yorkers remember all too clearly, a city suffering from rampant vandalism, shoplifting, petty theft, commercial fraud, drug dealing, and public street-walking is a low, vulgar, ugly, dishonest, and menacing place to live. Might this ambient climate explain the British public's concern about crime? It's more plausible than positing a media conspiracy to dupe a nation of credulous hysterics.

As for the downward trend in the BCS, as with Police Recorded Crime, it may reflect a real shift—in this case, a drop in victimization among homeowners who have grown cautious and more aware of crime—while completely missing a huge spike in youth crime and repeat crime in certain disorderly urban areas. Victimization studies also show that the crime rate in Britain is far higher than in most other European countries. Comparative analyses show England and Wales at the very top of the European crime leagues—and well above the U.S. as well.

Upon close inspection, the official crime statistics hardly suggest that the concerns of the public and press should be dismissed. I propose a counterhypothesis: the media's treatment of crime, while obviously no perfect measurement, may well be a better guide to what's really happening in Britain, or at least an equally valid one. The media, unlike the government, are responding in real time to market demand. The market in Britain for stories about ultraviolent juvenile delinquents is insatiable; perhaps the people who buy these newspapers are, in effect, responding to a better-designed survey than criminologists have been able yet to construct.

Why might Britain be suffering such high levels of crime? It isn't hard to guess. Officials at every level of the British criminal-justice system—detectives, judges, prison officials, probation officers—complain that too few criminals are caught and that those who are caught rarely receive sentences that will function as a deterrent. Lack of resources and a massive bureaucracy hamper police efforts: the average time to process an arrest in London is over ten hours, and the number of forms that must be filled out averages about 35, according to various analyses. Home

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Office figures released in 2007 show that police officers in England and Wales spend only about 13 percent of their time on patrol—and 20 percent on paperwork.

One London cop in the Criminal Investigation Division blames the police's ineffectiveness on the unintended effects of community policing. "There was a perception that there weren't enough beat cops—people who knew the local area," he remembers, which led to sending extra cops to problem spots. "But in practice, they ended up going to community meetings and liaison. They're not actually dealing with minor crimes. If they were answering emergency calls and dealing with minor crimes instead of doing community liaison, that would indeed take a huge load off the system, but they're not. So in practice, what this means is that when I started working as a police officer, there were 25 people on staff answering 999 calls"—the British equivalent of 911. "Now there are 15."

Perhaps as a consequence, more than two-thirds of burglaries reported to the London police are never investigated, according to police figures released under the Freedom of Information Act and obtained by the *Daily Telegraph*. Under 10 percent result in an arrest. And even if an arrest leads to a conviction, it's unlikely to include real punishment. The London policeman adds that it's common for a burglar to be arrested 30 times a year, taken to court 20 times a year, and punished with nothing more than a fine—"which is meaningless, because they can't pay. There's no chance that with minor-level crimes you'll go to prison." A London magistrate clarifies: "It's not that they *can't* pay, it's that they *won't*—and the system doesn't push the point." Theodore Dalrymple, a contributing editor of *City Journal* and a former prison doctor, tells me that he recently met a burglar on his 57th conviction. The burglar was fined 50 pounds, to be paid in five-pound installments—considerably less than someone in a legitimate business, making a comparable amount of money, would pay in taxes.

Juvenile criminals can be particularly confident that if they commit a crime, it is unlikely to carry any serious consequences. During the seventies and eighties, the government passed legislation making it much harder to impose long custodial sentences on minors. The London policeman mentions a schoolgirl in his borough who was recently arrested and found guilty of committing "grievous bodily harm"—which means that "bones were broken, someone's life was seriously affected; usually GBH implies surgical follow-up." She received a 12-month supervision order. "Essentially, just reporting in for a year. Kids see this and say, 'What the hell, what can you do to me?' "

Also during the seventies and eighties, the government introduced new forms of noncustodial sentencing, including community service and early-release schemes even for career criminals. In 2008, figures from the Ministry of Justice indicated that some 5,000 criminals who had already served more than *ten* jail sentences had received noncustodial sentences. Not surprisingly, a third of prosecutions in London collapse because witnesses won't testify: they know all too well that even if convicted, the criminals will be walking the streets terrifyingly soon.

The situation in Britain, then, resembles that of 1980s New York, whose crime problems were routinely called insoluble. What the British government fails to understand is that the majority of serious crimes are committed by a small cadre of criminals, who are also, disproportionately, the authors of minor crimes. If you lock these criminals up—reliably, and for a long time—crime will drop precipitously. The reason Broken Windows policing works is not that it is inherently important to jail every petty thug who breaks a window; it is that the window-breakers tend to be muggers, rapists, burglars, and murderers as well. If you get them off the streets, the rate of serious crime will fall. To dismiss as "true but trivial" the finding that "an astronomical amount of crime is committed" in Britain is only half right. The British people know this full well, even if their government does not.

JEZ COULSON/PANOS PICTURES

Joyriders celebrate after burning a stolen car in Sheffield's Manor Estate, which has one of the highest crime rates in Europe.

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The Consolations of Pessimism

In our age, as in Seneca's, the worst is always possible.

Alain de Botton

It's been clear for a while, at least since the collapse of Lehman Brothers last fall, that what we have to fear above all is hope itself. Attempts to trust that the worst is over and to stop frightening ourselves seem doomed to propel us into yet worse disappointment. We are not only unhappy, but—believing calm and happiness to be the norm—unhappy that we're unhappy.

It's time to recognize how odd and counterproductive is the optimism on which we have grown up. For the last 200 years, despite occasional shocks, the Western world has been dominated by a belief in progress, based on its extraordinary scientific and entrepreneurial achievements. But from a broader historical perspective, this optimism is an anomaly. Humans have spent the greater part of their existence drawing a curious comfort from expecting the worst. In the West, lessons in pessimism derive from two sources: Roman Stoic philosophy and Christianity. It may be time to remind ourselves of a few of their lessons—not to add to our misery but to alleviate our injured surprise and sorrow.

The Roman philosopher Seneca should be the author of the hour. Living in a time of continuous financial and political upheaval under the emperor Nero, Seneca interpreted philosophy as a discipline to keep us calm against a backdrop of continuous danger. His consolation was of the stiffest, darkest sort: "You say: 'I did not think it would happen.' Do you think there is anything that will not happen, when you know that it is possible to happen, when you see that it has already happened?" Seneca tried to calm the sense of injustice in his readers by reminding them, in AD 62, that natural and man-made disasters would always be part of their lives, however sophisticated and safe they thought they had become.

If we do not dwell on the risk of sudden calamity, in the markets and otherwise, and end up paying a price for our innocence, it is because reality comprises two cruelly confusing characteristics: on the one hand, continuity and reliability lasting across decades; on the other, unheralded cataclysms. We find ourselves divided between a plausible expectation that tomorrow will be much like today and the possibility that we will meet with an appalling event after which nothing will ever be the same. It is because we have such powerful incentives to neglect the second scenario that Seneca asked us to

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remember that our fate is forever in the hands of the Goddess of Fortune. This goddess can scatter gifts, and then, with terrifying speed, make a 50-year-old company disappear into a worthless asset, or let a balance sheet be destroyed by an evaporation of demand.

Because we are hurt most by what we do not expect, and because we must expect everything—"There is nothing which Fortune does not dare"—we must, argued Seneca, keep in mind at all times the possibility of dire events. No one should make an investment, undertake to run a company, sit on a board, or leave money in a bank without an awareness, which Seneca would have wished to be neither gruesome nor unnecessarily dramatic, of the darkest possibilities.

Secure in our financial prowess, we have for too long thought of ourselves as masters of our destiny. We have trusted in mathematical geniuses who promised us "risk management" and derivatives so complex that we didn't dare to look inside. Such trust could not be further from a Stoic mind-set. We must, stressed Seneca, expand our sense of what may at any time go wrong in our lives: "Nothing ought to be unexpected by us. Our minds should be sent forward in advance to meet all the problems, and we should consider not what is wont to happen, but what can happen. What is man? A vessel that the slightest shaking, the slightest toss will break. A body weak and fragile."

Christianity only reinforced the Stoic message. It pointed out that all human beings find it easy to imagine perfection, but that it's a problem—indeed a sin—to suppose that such perfection can ever occur on earth. Nothing human can ever be free of blemishes. There cannot be an end to boom and bust.

We have tended to cast such gloomy messages aside. The modern bourgeois philosophy pins its hopes firmly on two great presumed ingredients of happiness: love and work (more specifically, a healthy bonus). But a vast unthinking cruelty lies discreetly coiled within this magnanimous assurance that everyone will discover satisfaction here. It isn't that love and work are invariably incapable of delivering fulfillment—only that they almost never do for too long. And when an exception is misrepresented as a rule, our individual misfortunes, instead of seeming inevitable, weigh down on us like curses. In denying the natural place reserved in the human lot for longing and disaster, this philosophy denies us the possibility of collective consolation for our fractious marriages, our unexploited ambitions, and our exploded portfolios, and condemns us instead to solitary feelings of shame and persecution for having stubbornly failed to make more of ourselves.

We should instead remember the great pessimistic voices of history, of which I cherish two in particular. One is Seneca: "What need is there to weep over parts of life? The whole of it calls for tears." The other is the French moralist Chamfort: "A man should swallow a toad every morning to be sure of not meeting with anything more revolting in the day ahead."

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"Our minds should be sent forward in advance to meet all the problems, and we should consider not what is wont to happen, but what can happen."

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Portrait of the Artist as a Young Businesswoman

The design economy has turned bohemian outsiders into a new marketplace elite.

Kay S. Hymowitz

Suppose you were the parent of a bouncing new baby girl and a genie let you determine her future. Either she could be a great student, debate-team captain, editor of the literary magazine, class valedictorian, and eventually prelaw at Yale, or she could become a middling student, kind of bored with school, but a whiz at dioramas, self-portraits, and set designs for school plays who goes on to the product-design department at Parsons School of Design. No offense to the set designer, but you'd go for the Yalie, right?

Not so fast. You're probably thinking of the class artist of yesteryear—the doodler, the tinkerer, the sometimes nerdy, sometimes aggressively bohemian student who ranked in the school hierarchy somewhere above the tuba player and somewhere below the hockey team's substitute goalie. When I was in high school in the mid-1960s, he was a daydreamer named Ron who used his trusty Magic Markers to make me a dynamite series of posters based on the cartoon *Peanuts* when I ran for school vice president. (I lost, but not because of the campaign art.) Ron didn't do that well on his SATs, as artsy types usually didn't, and went off to I'm not sure where. What could a guy like him do? Become an artist? Mid-century America didn't offer many options.

But in today's visual age, the Rons rule. Visual artists are living in a career candy store filled with cool jobs that didn't exist when their parents were their age; some, indeed, were the stuff of futurist fantasy even ten years ago. There are graphic, industrial, set, and Web designers; costume, dress, shoe, handbag, furniture, wallpaper, tile, and toy designers; strategic, font, user-interface, video-game, and infographic designers. There are creative and art directors, fashion and food stylists, production and lighting artists, and animators. There are even—I kid you not—experiential

JILL MALEK

Jill Malek designs everything from this Sleeping Briar Rose wallpaper to yoga mats.

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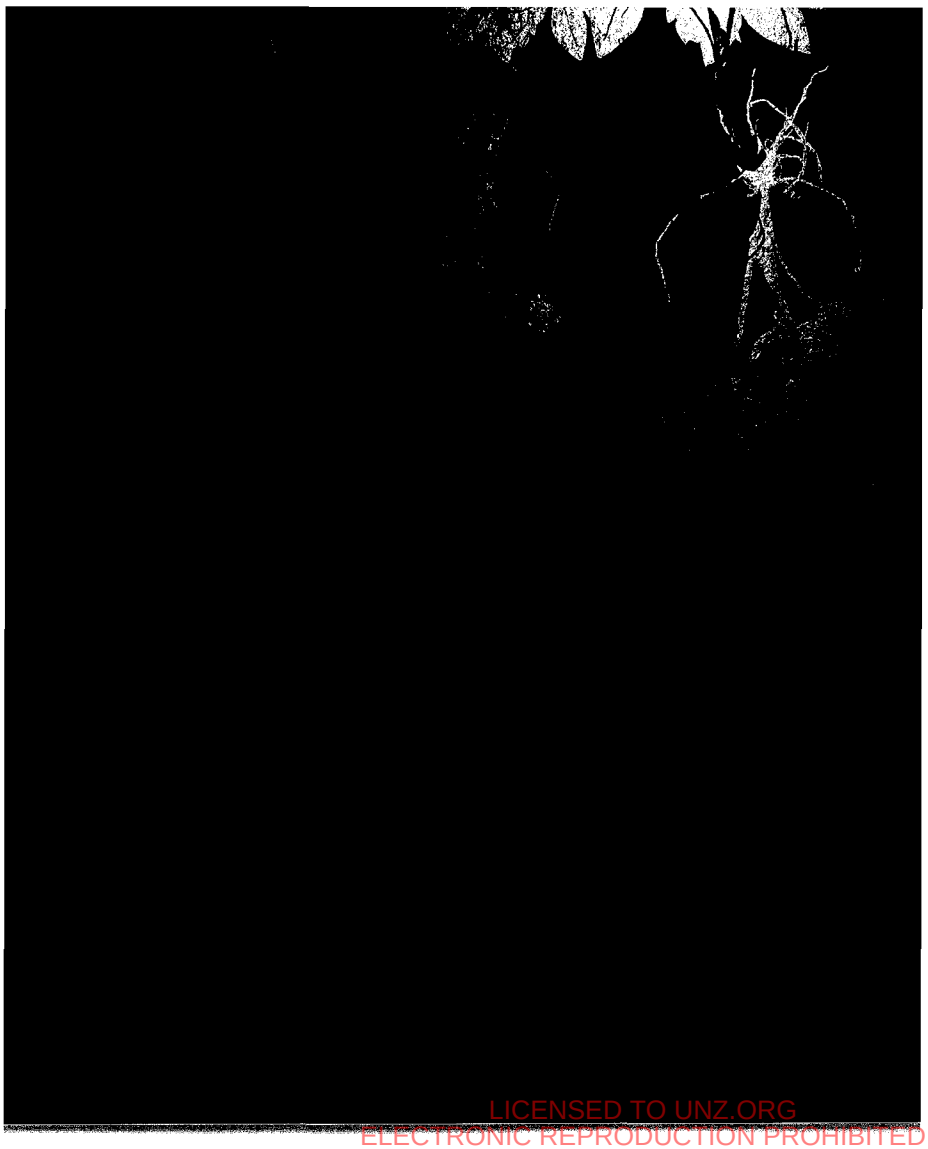

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designers, lifestyle designers, design anthropologists, and design psychologists.

Designers are big shots these days. They can be columnists for the *New York Times* (graphic designer Charles Blow), Oscar-night celebrities (architect David Rockwell, who was the production designer of this year's Academy Awards and starred in a preshow film), and TV hosts (carpenter and designer Ty Pennington, host of *Extreme Makeover, Home Edition*, one of a slew of popular design shows). Designers can be household names—literally, in the case of Philippe Starck, whose famous toothbrushes and toilet brushes grace master baths everywhere. Designers have agents. Designers give courses at business schools—or they start them, the way David Kelley founded Stanford's new "D School." Designers sit in offices near the CEO at formerly buttoned-up corporations like Procter and Gamble. Heck, some CEOs practically *are* designers—get well soon, Steve Jobs!

Of course, like everything else in this tottering economy, the design industry is hurting. But assuming we're not all collecting grass for our (unleveraged) huts in the coming years, the Rons of this world, people with visual talent and gumption, will remain beneficiaries of a poorly understood shift in the economy, one that has turned artsy outsiders into insiders, raised the stature of aesthetic skills to approach that of cognitive skills, gotten young creative juices flowing, and been the source of major innovation and entrepreneurship.

When most people say "design," they probably think of the way something looks. There is an object that has a purpose—a table, a refrigerator, a computer—and during its manufacture, it gets painted red or lined with wood veneer or decorated with, say, a silhouette of an apple with a bite taken out of it. A designer's job is to attend to these aesthetic decisions, exhibiting a feel for color, balance, texture, and shape.

In this sense, design has always been with us. Throughout history, artisans—furniture makers, tailors and seamstresses, cobblers, metalworkers—were de facto designers. But it was only at the turn of the twentieth century, as machines were taking over the production of everyday objects, that design became a profession, and the designer a self-conscious actor in the marketplace. The artists of the famous Bauhaus school were the first to see a way to marry art and industry. The clocks, chairs, cameras, and teapots that they created launched the field of industrial—sometimes called product—design. Machines seemed to rob objects of their souls; the designer would bring the soul back.

At around the same time, industrialization gave birth to a related discipline: graphic design. For centuries, printers had depended on laborious typesetting techniques. Only in the late nineteenth century, with the invention of color lithography, did it become possible to mass-produce color text and drawings. Some businesses immediately grasped the marketing potential. One, the French cabaret Moulin Rouge, gave a historic launch to the new technology when it hired a young scribbler by the name of Toulouse-Lautrec to create posters.

But despite the august names associated with its origins, the design profession never got much respect from no-nonsense Americans. Designers got their hands dirty, like plumbers or auto mechanics, but their work seemed effete and beside the point. In the social pecking order, they fell into an ill-defined purgatory between blue and white collar. "If you worked in a design studio in 1980, you were surrounded by colored paper, rubber cement, X-Acto knives and cans of aerosol spray glue," Michael Beirut, a partner at the international design firm Pentagram, recently observed. "It was messy." According to George Lois, famous for his striking *Esquire* covers in the 1960s, designers working for magazines were lowly technicians. Editorial committees decided by fiat what belonged on an issue's cover, and the art department shut up and took direction. In ad agencies, copywriters sometimes referred to art directors as "wrists." The key to product success was "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should," not banal reproductions of a cigarette box.

Not any more. If industrialization turned design into a modest profession, technology and

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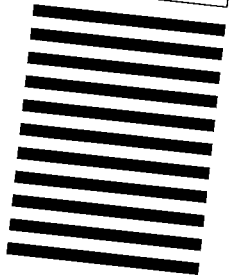

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globalization have expanded and glamorized it into its own economic sector. Call it Big Design.

Computers are the heart of Big Design. They propelled designers from the ranks of ink-stained wretches to those of postindustrial knowledge workers, in part by making it possible for them to work faster and more innovatively. "In the era before computers, when you had to order typeset, you couldn't experiment," says Eric Baker of Eric Baker Associates. "It was much too expensive. And it took overnight." Then Computer Aided Design (CAD) software—Photoshop being the best-known of many products—came to the market. In the past, "if you needed a picture of coffee and a doughnut, you had to hire a photographer," Baker continues. "Now I shoot it myself. Photoshop changed everything." Three-dimensional Computer Aided Design—3D CAD—enables industrial designers to create prototypes of simple products like sunglasses and send them directly to the manufacturer. CAD also makes it easier to customize products, as designers using Solidworks software did when they recently created a swing set for Malia and Sasha Obama for the White House lawn.

"Computers propelled designers from the ranks of ink-stained wretches to those of postindustrial knowledge workers."

The digital revolution has expanded the universe of design and the very meaning of the word. Consider Web design. Ten years ago, a company might hire a graphic designer—or maybe just a skilled relative—to create a brochure and business cards. Nowadays, people want fancy websites with animation, audio and video insets, clever drawings and photos, and user-friendly navigation tools that only professionals can create. "The Internet entailed not only the explosion of information but also the *aestheticization of information*," writes Vanderbilt sociologist Richard Lloyd in *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City*.

The boundary between technology and design has increasingly blurred. For the post-digital design generation, more efficient computer chips and improvements in circuitry and plastics often are more essential to an object's aesthetics than are color and decorative detail. Design, in Apple founder Jobs's well-known formulation, is "how it works." Apple's MP3 player—the sleek iPod, designed by a team headed by the Briton Jonathan Ive—embodies the contemporary marriage of design and technology. Like the artists of the Bauhaus school, Jobs wanted his company to "stand at the intersection between technology and the arts"—and so it did. Every appliance maker is now racing to do for the toaster or radio what Apple did for the computer and MP3 player.

While technology added to Big Design's prestige, globalization spread its message. With Photoshop's arrival, graphic artists in particular worried that the technological revolution energizing their business would also be its undoing. After all, desktop publishing had democratized design, making it possible for any 12-year-old to distinguish Times New Roman from Garamond. Yet as Virginia Postrel notes in her 2003 book *The Substance of Style*, the opposite happened. Cheap labor markets in China, Thailand, and India enabled firms to inundate the world with inexpensive designed objects, which educated the public eye, which in turn raised the bar for more attractive shoes, children's clothes, handbags, and furniture. People have learned to discriminate colors, styles, and fonts the way their ancestors could differentiate the genera of prairie grass. Before, Postrel observes, "aesthetics . . . was a specialized good available mostly in a few large urban markets." By the last decade of the twentieth century, a mass "age of aesthetics" had dawned.

In the business world, design has thus moved from a decorative sideshow to the main stage. How do you make your camera or washing machine stand out from the crowds of other products that perform about as well and at

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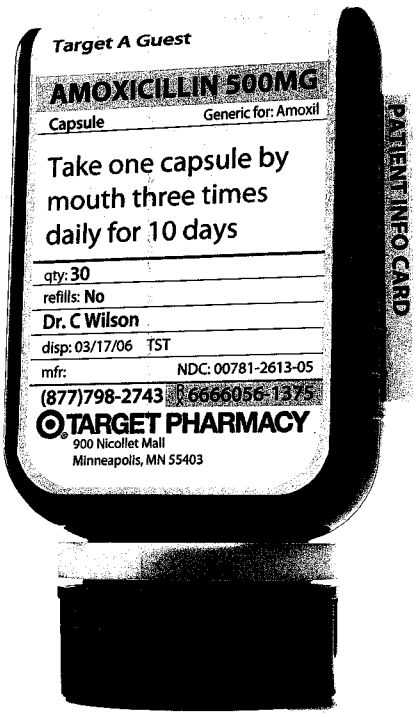
approximately the same price? Answer: good design. A *BusinessWeek* article recounts former Samsung chairman Lee Kun-hee's design conversion when he visited Los Angeles in 1993. Why, wondered Lee, did Samsung's products look so much less appealing than Sony's, even though their engineering was comparable? He returned to South Korea, introduced an in-house design school, and sent his design staff to world capitals to explore museums and modern architecture. By 2004, the company had 470 designers, was increasing its design budget by 20 to 30 percent a year, was winning major design awards, and had entered "the first tier of global companies."

Designers have been summoned from their remote studio offices to work directly with corporate strategists and marketers to plan future products and coordinate advertising campaigns; A. G. Lafley, the CEO of Procter and Gamble and a design prophet, calls design his company's DNA. Corporate recruiters woo design-school students; business schools do case studies of design as corporate strategy. "The MFA is the new MBA," business-trend writer Daniel Pink announced in the *Harvard Business Magazine* in 2004, an exaggeration but a suggestive one. Whole nations have recognized the economic importance of design. The United Kingdom and Singapore, for instance, have government agencies to support the design economy, while China is rapidly increasing its number of design schools.

Some visionaries see "design thinking" as the management theory for the twenty-first century, just as Total Quality Management was for the late twentieth. "Businesspeople don't just need to understand designers better—they need to become designers," argues Roger Martin, dean of the University of Toronto's Joseph L. Rotman School of Management. Businesses have always relied on top-down management based on the "quantifiable, measurable, and probable," Martin says. What they need is the design studio's more "temporary and project based" approach, which embraces "the unpredictable, the visual, the experimental."

Like any large, complex industry, Big Design has proliferated into a mass of hybrid subspecialties. Let's say you own a business selling widgets and want to expand your market. Well, you might consider hiring a "design anthropologist," a scholar who studies how people use products in their native habitats—home or office, say—to figure out how to improve their experience; Microsoft has sent anthropologists to developing countries to explore how different cultures use technology. Or you might look into employing a design psychologist to advise you about how the brain reacts to the color and shape of your widgets. If you're so inclined, you can pay a "strategic designer" to help with long-range planning. And don't forget the "experiential designer," who can advise you on the



DEBORAH ADLER

After her grandmother accidentally swallowed the wrong pills, designer Deborah Adler came up with a more user-friendly bottle, which Target has adopted.

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emotions and sensory engagement of potential customers. ESI, a New York–based experiential-design firm, revamped some of Best Buy's warehouse-style megastores into interactive, village-like spaces with six "experience-based zones," where buyers can try games or watch plasma TVs in comfy chairs.

For your personal use, you can even engage a "lifestyle designer" to help you arrange your home, travel, and general life choices in an aesthetically pleasing way. One such professional, Melissa Galt, promises that with her help, "creating your interior" will be "a process of self-discovery." Galt, incidentally, promotes herself as the great-granddaughter of Frank Lloyd Wright. Her ancestry provides a graphic illustration, as it were, of the post-modern unfolding of Big Design.

"For your personal use, you can engage a 'lifestyle designer' to help arrange your home, travel, and general life choices."

Also adding to the industry's résumé are the burgeoning high-tech fields of "creative technology," "information graphics," and "user-interface design." Jacob Barton is the principal and founder of Local Projects, a New York firm that creates interactive exhibits for museums and public spaces (it recently won a commission to codesign the permanent exhibit at the National September 11 Memorial Museum at Ground Zero). On Barton's eight-person staff are a filmmaker, a graphic designer, and a creative technologist—an engineer who ensures that the cool things that the rest of the staff comes up with actually happen when you touch the screen. Creative technologists are increasingly joining the conference table with copywriters and graphic designers to create advertising campaigns, ad writer Randall Rothenberg observes.

Businesses and bureaucracies have long hired people to make charts and graphs so that data become easier to grasp. But the Internet has expanded the imaginative possibilities of such design work. Stamen Design in San Francisco, for example, has created an animated database of sale and rental properties for the real-estate company Trulia, and is experimenting with a project called Crimespotting, a map of constantly updated data on murders, robberies, and other crimes in Oakland. Computer scientist and software developer Valdis Krebs recently took the 162-page list of Bernard Madoff's 13,000 victims and turned it into an interactive map. Looking like an intricate geometric galaxy, the map lets you click on a victim's name and quickly zoom to Google News for more information about him or her. In short order, designers will likely make a conventional PowerPoint presentation look as dated as black-and-white television.

The flowering of the design industry has produced gratifying work for great numbers of talented people who otherwise would have yawned their way from nine to five. Some years ago, I published an article about the intensity, energy, and "soulfulness" that many young people were finding and embracing in the new-economy workplace (see "Ecstatic Capitalism's Brave New Workplace," Winter 2001). Designers are a perfect example. They're able to meld play and work, hobby and job. They expect to find personal gratification and significance in their work. They often talk about their "passion for design" and demonstrate the enterprising animal spirits that have always fueled American innovation.

So how do these animal spirits turn into business? Let's start with an instructive, though admittedly exceptional, example. Chloe Dao, one of seven daughters of Laotian immigrants, grew up in Houston. Like many immigrants, her parents dreamed of medical and law degrees for their children; unfortunately, Dao seemed mostly interested in clothes. She was ambitious enough to design and sew her own prom dress, but her future must have seemed limited, especially after she dropped out of college during her first semester. Eventually, though, she made

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her way to the Fashion Institute of Design in New York, and after moving through various fashion and marketing jobs, opened her own boutique in Houston. In 2006, she was the winner on the second season of *Project Runway*, the popular Bravo reality show. Designers Management Agency, a company that does for designers what Creative Artists Agency does for actors and directors, then swooped in to sign her. She now has her own clothing line, as well as a contract to design iPod cases for sale at Office Depot and Target. A generation ago, Dao's design career would probably have ended with her prom dress. In the design economy, she's a player.

Deborah Adler, another design-world success, illustrates the industry's variety. The daughter of a New York doctor and nurse, she graduated from the University of Vermont and then obtained a master's degree at the School of Visual Arts in New York. As she was searching for a thesis topic, she learned that her grandmother had accidentally swallowed prescription pills meant for her grandfather. Looking in their medicine cabinet later, Adler realized how the mistake happened: prescription bottles were confusing. To a shrewd design-type like Adler, that meant poor design. For her thesis, Adler created a new kind of bottle, with a label bearing the drug's name, not the pharmacy's, in bold at the top; rings of different colors around the bottle's neck, indicating the person in the household using the drug; a flat instead of a curved surface, to be more readable; and more user-friendly warning signals. Target loved the design—"Safe Rx," Adler called it—and revamped its computer software and pharmacy procedures around it. Adler went on to work at the studio of the legendary Milton Glaser, where, among various projects, she's been designing other medical products for safety and efficiency.

Both Dao and Adler hit the big time, but plenty of young design entrepreneurs follow their bliss by starting small cottage businesses. The high-tech economy has paved the way for a revival of artisan-style production, more reminiscent of our craftsman great-grandfathers than of our industrial fathers. It doesn't take all that much capital or risk to customize production with a computer, just as it doesn't take a large staff to network and promote a business in the Internet era. Some young designers never do a business plan or spreadsheet, stumbling into, say, a jewelry or stationery business after making a necklace or card for family, friends, then friends of friends, and so on. It helps that they often live in neo-Bohemia, as Richard Lloyd dubs the formerly gritty Los Angeles, Brooklyn, and Chicago neighborhoods where young metalsmiths, letterpress printers, and lighting and graphic designers swap ideas and business contacts in retrofitted factories. If they're really lucky, designers might find themselves tapped by corporate talent scouts on the hunt for a hip new aesthetic. Back in the sixties, we'd have charged these artists with selling out, but that was before the design economy permanently shattered the boundaries between art and business.

Sarah Cihat is a Brooklyn design entrepreneur participating in this boundary-smashing. Like many other young designers, Cihat couldn't figure out what to do with her life after high school. She dropped out after a semester at the University of Tennessee. "I knew there was nothing there for me," she says. Fortunately, she found her way to Parsons School of Design, where her thesis project—reglazing and painting thrift-shop dishes in bright colors with bold graphics—has led to a thriving business. The 29-year-old now sells both her dishes and candles (in partnership with Joya Candles) to a growing number of consumers at places like Barneys and LouisBoston.

Cihat's fellow Brooklynite Jill Malek was an Oberlin fine-arts major with little interest in commercial design. Upon graduating, though, she learned graphic design and took a number of corporate jobs. After developing her "skill set" and realizing that "the fine artist in me was not fulfilled," she started her own business. At 32, working out of her Brooklyn Heights apartment, Malek designs websites, stationery, invitations, and hand-screened wallpaper. As it has for Cihat and Dao, the design economy has allowed Malek to spread her aesthetic vision into entirely unforeseen areas: she recently inked a deal with Yogamatic to create a line of yoga mats. When I spoke with her in February, well into the current

STAMEN DESIGN

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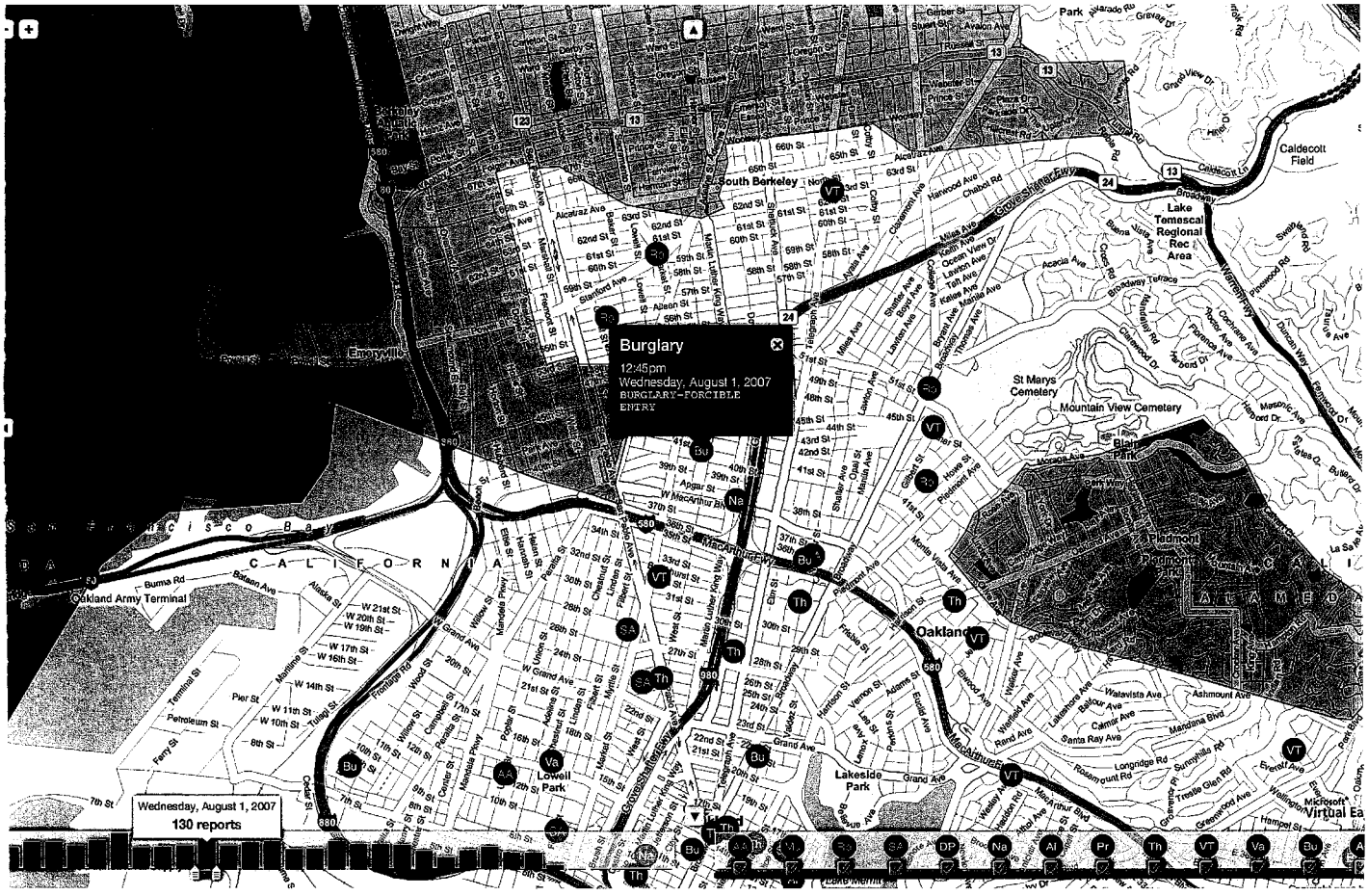

A major area of modern design is information graphics, such as Stamen Design's interactive map of Oakland crime.

recession, she was—fingers crossed—"working nonstop."

It's no coincidence that these designers are all female. The design economy has been a boon for women. In the 1960s, says Eric Baker, graphic design was a closed fraternity; there were few women in art departments or design studios, just as there were few in law offices or on factory floors. Today, by contrast, women constitute 60 percent of design-school students, and design studios are full of them. (The technology-based areas of Big Design are still largely male, however.) It may be that the design sector suits women particularly well. As the management maven Tom Peters notes, "Women buy most stuff, hence women should design most stuff." Plus, as Daniel Pink points out in *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the World*, some recent neuroscience suggests that women may be stronger on a range of right-brain talents—empathy, emotion, and sensitivity to beauty—that serve them well in the design economy.

Because designers tend to be independent-minded, they gravitate toward entrepreneurship, as do women these days. According to the Labor Department Occupational Outlook Handbook for this year, 25 percent of graphic designers are

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self-employed, as are 30 percent of industrial or commercial designers. There's no way to know what proportion are women, but it's a good guess that it's high. The Center for Women's Business Research finds that nearly half of all U.S. businesses are female-owned; women start ventures at twice the rate of men. On the website Etsy, a kind of eBay for indie craftspeople to hawk their wares, 95 percent of the 185,000 artists are women, with an average age of 33. True, they're primarily stay-at-home moms and college students looking to supplement their income rather than make a full-time living, but some of those 185,000 will become the next Sarah Cihats and Jill Maleks.

What are Big Design's future prospects? The short-term outlook is about as bad as it is in almost every other economic sector. People are buying fewer sofas, cameras, clothes, and necklaces. Many of the cottage design businesses that have sprouted in the boom years will likely fail. Advertisers are pulling back: a slew of interior design magazines, including *Country Home*, *House and Garden*, *Vogue Living*, and *Domino* have shuttered in the past year and a half. AIGA, the graphic-design industry's professional organization, has seen a precipitous plunge in its monthly "confidence index." In a recent talk that roiled the design world, Ian Cochrane, one of Britain's most notable design entrepreneurs, recommended that design agencies consider a three-day week and advised design students to "get out of this business . . . [which] does not need you."

And it's likely that shopping patterns have changed, if not forever, then for a long time. Humbled by the unexpected fragility of real estate, people won't be indulging in regular major kitchen renovations, and when they do renovate, they'll be interested less in the coolest new countertops than in the ones that will last 15 years. There's a good deal of soul-searching right now among designers about their own role in the global debt-fueled buying spree of recent years. As they ponder the relation between their profession and the detritus of planned obsolescence, they're likely to ask the same questions at their studio desks—How necessary is this? How long should it last?—that buyers will be asking at the checkout counter.

Still, the long-term picture is less grim than Cochrane's advice implies. The democratization of design has changed us for good. There's no going back to a world where design is a luxury, where art directors are wrists, and where a radio is a clunky RCA. We prefer good-looking things, and we will insist on them. If anything, we may get even pickier. "The recession itself may increase design pressures," Virginia Postrel observes. "As consumers demand more value for their dollars, design is one form of value they expect at any given price point—including cheap ones. I observed this phenomenon in the 2001–02 recession. Rather than reverting to the expectations of a decade earlier, consumers became even more demanding about design quality, not only in products and graphics but also in environments such as hotels and restaurants." As businesses keep looking for ways to separate their products and services from the chaff, even seemingly frivolous professionals like experiential designers and design anthropologists will continue to find some demand for their services.

Broadband access will keep expanding, too, making Web content a continuing source of jobs for infographic and Web designers. Employment boards currently list thousands of positions in multimedia jobs, with entry-level salaries between $32,000 and $65,000. And the demand for well-designed personal electronics is likely to remain strong. Even in the middle of the current downturn, iPod sales have fallen only slightly compared with the first quarter of last year, while iPhone sales are growing smartly. Amazon hasn't released sales figures yet, but by most accounts Kindle, the company's eye-catching electronic reading device, is attracting otherwise wary consumers.

Also working in favor of the design economy is the spirit of its employees. Designers tend to be a forward-looking, can-do crowd by nature, and they know that they are laboring in a field whose parameters are still unfolding. Yes, designers are hurting, but they're on the lookout for opportunities. It's a good bet they'll find them.

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Monetarism Defiant

Legendary economist Anna Schwartz says the feds have misjudged the financial crisis.

Guy Sorman

Anna Schwartz must be the oldest active revolutionary on earth. Born in 1915 in New York, she can still be found nearly every day at her office in the National Bureau of Economic Research on Fifth Avenue, where she has been tirelessly gathering data since 1941. And as her experience proves, data can transform the world. During the 1960s, with Milton Friedman, she wrote *A Monetary History of the United States*, a book that forever changed our knowledge of economics and the way that governments operate. Schwartz put ten years of detective work into the project, which helped found the monetarist theory of economics. "Not only by gathering new data but by coming up with new ways to measure information, we were able to demonstrate the link between the quantity of money generated by the banks, inflation, and the business cycle," she explains.

Before the monetarist revolution, most economists believed that the quantity of money circulating in the economy had no influence on prices or on growth. History showed otherwise, Friedman and Schwartz argued. Every time the Federal Reserve (and the central banks before it) created an excess of money, either by keeping interest rates too low or by injecting liquidity into banks, prices inflated. At first, the easy money might seem to boost consumers' purchasing power. But the increase would be only apparent, since sellers tended to raise the prices of their goods to absorb the extra funds. Investors would then start speculating on short-term bets—whether tulips in the seventeenth century or subprime mortgages more recently—seeking to beat the expected inflation. Eventually, such "manias," as Schwartz calls them, would begin replacing long-term investment, thus destroying entrepreneurship and harming economic growth.

By contrast, by removing excess liquidity, the central bank can cause the sudden collapse of speculative excess, and it can also hurt healthy recovery or growth by constricting the money supply. There is now a near-consensus among economists that lack of liquidity caused the Great Depression. During the severe downturn of 1930, the Fed did nothing as a first group of banks failed. Other depositors became alarmed that they would lose their money if their banks failed, too, leading to further bank runs, propelling a frightening downward economic spiral.

To encourage steady growth while avoiding the pitfalls of inflation, speculation, and recession, the monetarists recommend establishing predictability in the value of currency—steadily expanding or contracting the money supply to answer the needs of the economy. "At first, central bankers and governments did not accept our theory," recalls Schwartz. Margaret Thatcher was the first to understand that the monetarists were right, following their rules when she came to power in 1979, taming inflation and reinvigorating the British economy. The U.S. followed during the early 1980s, led by Paul Volcker, a Friedmanite then at the head of the Federal Reserve, who, with Ronald Reagan's strong support, ended raging inflation, though not without a lot of short-term pain. "It was a strenuous experience," Schwartz remembers. As Volcker tightened the money supply, making credit harder to come by, unemployment spiked to about 10 percent; many firms failed. But starting in 1983, the inflation beast defeated, a new era of vigorous growth got under way, based on innovation and long-term investment.

This lesson of the recent past seems all but forgotten, Schwartz says. Instead of staying the monetarist course, Volcker's successor as Fed

Photograph by William Meyers

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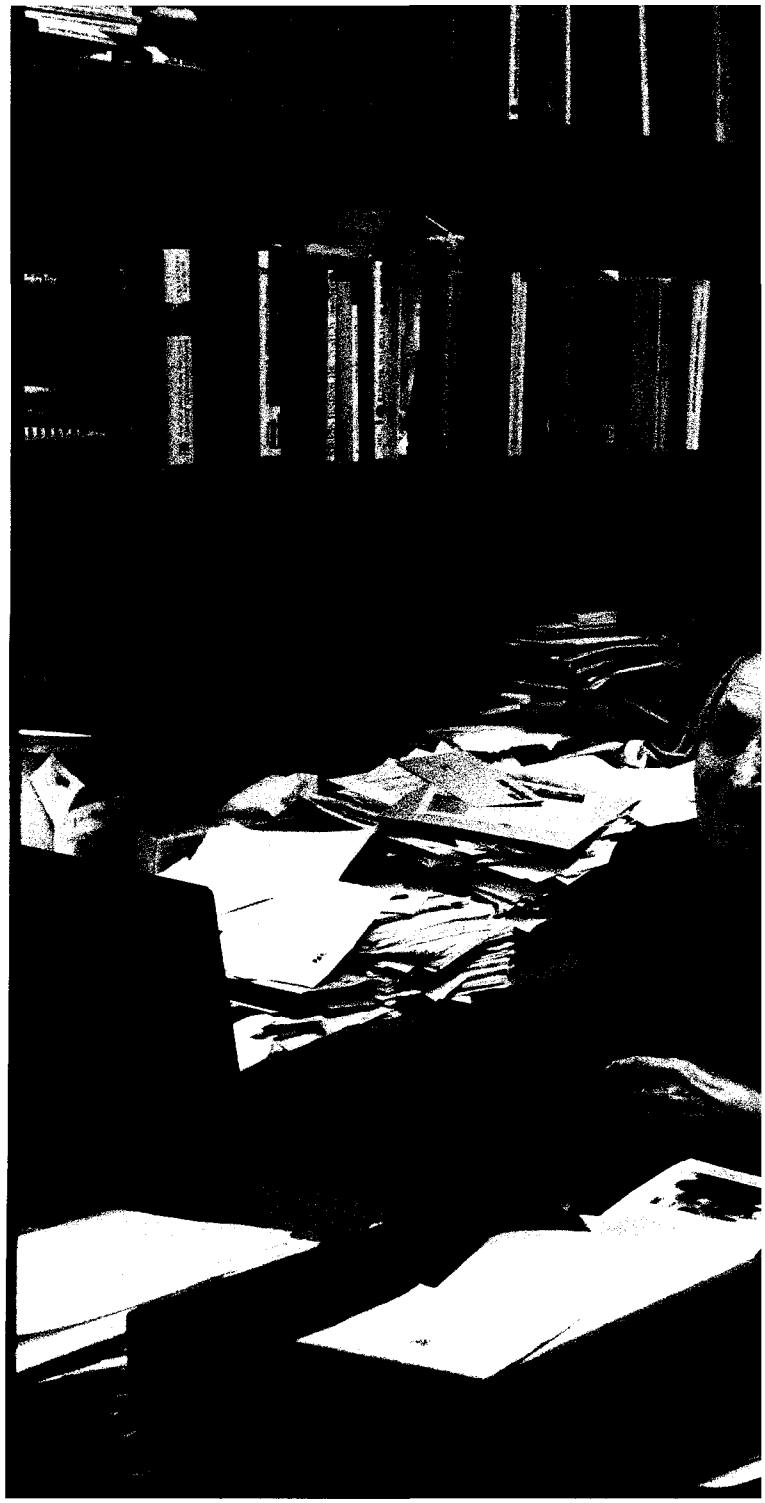

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chairman, Alan Greenspan, too often preferred to *manage* the economy—a fatal conceit, a monetarist would say. Greenspan wanted to avoid recessions at all costs. By keeping interest rates at historic lows, however, his easy money fueled manias: first the Internet bubble and then the now-burst mortgage bubble. "A too-easy monetary policy induces people to acquire whatever is the object of desire in a mania period," Schwartz notes.

Greenspan's successor, Ben Bernanke, has followed the same path in confronting the current economic crisis, Schwartz charges. Instead of the steady course that the monetarists recommend, the Fed and the Treasury "try to break news on a daily basis and they look for immediate gratification," she says. "Bernanke is looking for sensations, with new developments every day."

Yet isn't Bernanke a disciple of Friedman and Schwartz? He publicly refers to them as mentors, and, thanks to their scientific breakthrough, he has famously declared that "the Great Depression will not happen again." Bernanke is right about the past, Schwartz says, "but he is fighting the wrong war today; the present crisis has nothing to do with a lack of liquidity." President Obama's stimulus is similarly irrelevant, she believes, since the crisis also has nothing to do with a lack of demand or investment. The credit crunch, which is the recession's actual cause, comes only from a lack of trust, argues Schwartz. Lenders aren't lending because they don't know who is solvent, and they can't know who is solvent because portfolios remain full of mortgage-backed securities and other toxic assets.

To rekindle the credit market, the banks must get rid of those toxic assets. That's why Schwartz supported, in principle, the Bush administration's first proposal for responding to the crisis—to buy bad assets from banks—though not, she emphasizes, while pricing those assets so generously as to prop up failed institutions. The administration abandoned its plan when it appeared too complicated to price the assets. Bernanke and then–Treasury secretary Henry Paulson subsequently shifted to recapitalizing the banks directly. "Doing so is shifting from trying to save the banking system to trying to save bankers, which is not the same thing," Schwartz says. "Ultimately, though, firms that made wrong decisions should fail. The market works better when wrong decisions are punished and good decisions make you rich." She's more sympathetic to Treasury secretary Timothy Geithner's plan, unveiled in March, to give private investors money to help them buy the toxic assets, but wonders if the Obama administration will continue to support the plan if the assets' prices turn out to be so low, once investors start bidding for them, that they threaten the banks.

What about "systemic risk"—much heard about these days to justify the government's massive intervention in the economy in recent months? Schwartz considers this an excuse for bankers to save their skins after making so many bad decisions. "The worst thing for a government to do, though, is to act without principles, to make ad hoc decisions, to do something one day and another thing tomorrow," she says. The market will respond positively only after the government begins to follow a steady, predictable course. To prove her point, Schwartz points out that nothing the government has done to date has really thawed credit.

Schwartz indicts Bernanke for fighting the wrong war. Could one turn the same accusation against her? Should we worry about inflation when some believe deflation to be the real enemy? "The risk of deflation is very much exaggerated," she answers. Inflation seems to her "unavoidable": the Federal Reserve is creating money with little restraint, while Treasury expenditures remain far in excess of revenue. The inflation spigot is thus wide open. To beat the coming inflation, a "new Paul Volcker will be needed at the head of the Federal Reserve."

Who listens to her these days? "I'm not a media person," she tells me. She rarely grants interviews, which distract her from her current research: a survey of government intervention in setting foreign exchange rates between 1962 and 1985. Never before have these data been combined to show what works and what doesn't. In her nineties, she remains a trendsetter.

Schwartz at her Fifth Avenue office

Research for this article was supported by the Brunie Fund for New York Journalism.

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Spendthrift Sunbelt States

Arizona, Florida, and Nevada have run through the riches of their boom and are starting to look more like cash-strapped New York.

Nicole Gelinas

If states were airlines, New York and California would be Delta and United. Even when competently managed, they must shoulder the institutional inheritance of decades of other people's decisions, good and bad. They must bear the heavy cost of legions of retired government workers. And they carry billions of dollars of debt that backs expensive, complex infrastructure.

Over the last few decades, when New Yorkers and Californians tired of paying high taxes to fund big government, they tended to migrate to what we might call the JetBlue states: Arizona, Florida, and Nevada. In those three low-tax refuges, the construction industry swelled to build houses for the new residents. And the construction workers themselves needed houses, providing jobs for still more construction workers. All the new people needed new places to shop, as well as new doctors, dentists, and restaurants. The local financial industry also grew and grew, filling office parks with the folks who did the back-office work for all the mortgages that New York bankers were eagerly approving. The result: double-digit population growth.

But during the boom times, elected officials in Arizona, Florida, and Nevada took a page out of the old states' playbook, driving up spending at an unsustainable pace. Now that the growth of the low-tax states has hit a wall, shattering revenues, they face a tough choice: they can raise taxes to fund permanently higher costs, or they can aggressively cut spending. So far, it's proving surprisingly easy for them to choose Option One, taking a small step toward transforming themselves into the high-tax states that so many of their own residents have fled.

Between 2000 and 2008, the population of the United States grew 8 percent. But Nevada's population grew nearly four times as fast, Arizona's more than three times as fast, and Florida's nearly twice as fast. In 2006, as the housing bubble expanded to its maximum, the JetBlue states boasted five of the nation's ten fastest-growing cities. Midsize towns sprang from almost nothing—like Queen Creek, Arizona, an hour from Phoenix. In 2000, it was horse and farm country; since then, it has more than quintupled in size, to a humming municipality of nearly 25,000.

Residential property values soared during the same period, more than doubling in Phoenix and Las Vegas and rising even faster in Miami and Tampa, according to Standard & Poor's. Only Southern California and Washington, D.C., clocked better (though illusory) results. Bubble-era property values mattered acutely to these states' economies because they helped fire economic growth. As home prices went up, local homeowners, flush with cash from refinancing their houses, dined out frequently and spent lots of money on consumer goods. These tourist-magnet states also drew hordes of visitors from the rest of the country, with their own fistfuls of cash drawn from inflated assets back home, ready to spend and spend.

Graphs by Alberto Mena

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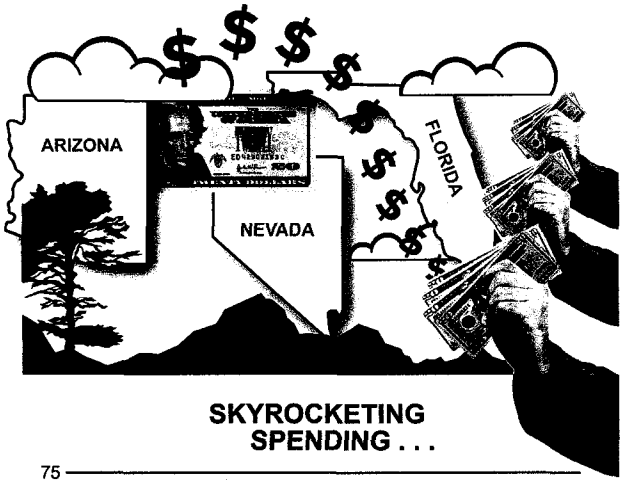

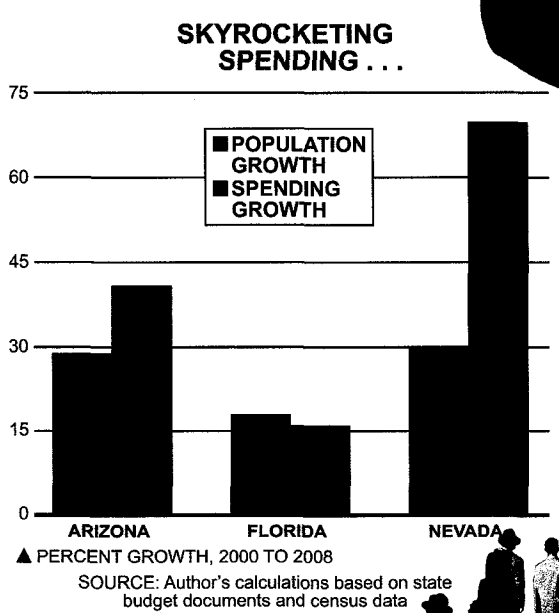

In fact, all three states are heavily dependent on sales and other taxes paid by tourists. Nevada, for example, derives nearly 60 percent of its general-fund revenues from sales taxes and gaming taxes, and it has long solicited out-of-staters to do the high-rolling spending. "Nevada's revenue is almost single-sourced," a spokesman for MGM Mirage told a local TV station earlier this year. "The overwhelming majority is coming from the tourism sector." The three states are also heavily dependent on the convention business—itself largely driven by a booming financial industry. And all three proved attractive for buyers of second homes—who, confident in the ever-rising value of their good investments, also spent well while on their semipermanent vacations.

Then came the nation's housing bust, and the states whose property values had accelerated the fastest took the heaviest damage. In Arizona today, a just-opened Wal-Mart and Target sit near acres of dead orange trees, an orchard gone into foreclosure and now drearily neglected. In one of the wealthy, half-decade-old subdivisions that blossomed in the Arizona desert, a house is either for sale or for rent on nearly every block. If its front lawn wasn't originally "zeroscaped"—that is, planted with natural desert brush that doesn't require much water—it is now, as the desert has inexorably reclaimed any other greenery.

Invisible on each street are the millions of dollars in mortgage debt now backed by nothing as home values have deflated. A third of Arizona's mortgage borrowers are now "under water," according to the real-estate research group First American CoreLogic—meaning that they owe more money on their mortgages than their houses are currently worth. Florida is in similar straits. And in Nevada, almost half of all homeowners have such "negative equity," including 55 percent of homeowners in Clark County, which includes Las Vegas.

Unemployment in the Jet-Blue states has also shot up. In just months, all three have hemorrhaged more than half of the new jobs that they had created since 2000 in the high-growth industries of construction, financial services, and tourism. People who aren't buying new houses don't need construction workers or bankers to arrange new mortgages. Visitors who aren't coming—either because they can no longer spend money drawn from ever-rising home values, or because the bailed-out banks they work for are canceling their resort meetings—don't need new casinos, restaurants, and hotels. Indeed, job losses in these three states have led the rest of the country.

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Since the economy's peak in December 2007, unemployment has risen 55 percent nationwide. In Nevada, it's up 81 percent; in Florida, 79 percent; and in Arizona, 63 percent.

And the three states' scorching population growth, which stoked so much construction and other economic activity, has abruptly slowed. Partly that's because people can't sell their houses elsewhere to buy cheaper houses in the high-growth states; also, people can no longer buy second homes as casually as they could three years ago. In the year leading up to July 2008, says Brookings Institution demographic expert William H. Frey, "compared with their mid-decade peaks, Phoenix took in only half as many migrants, Las Vegas almost two thirds less, and Tampa and Orlando fewer than at any time in almost 20 years."

As property values and jobs have vaporized, taking tax revenues with them, a trend—not surprising when you look at the old states' history—has come to light: spending in the three Sunbelt states is way, way higher than it was before the boom started. New Yorkers and Californians are used to their governments' incorrigibly spending beyond their means during the good times, necessitating ever-higher taxes to fund the higher budget base when the bad times eventually return. The taxes, in turn, make it harder to attract private-sector jobs and to keep young new residents once they start families.

But in terms of flagrant profligacy during the good times, Arizona, Nevada, and Florida—those low-taxing, low-spending, every-man-for-himself states—have put New York and California to shame. Between 2000 and 2008, Arizona state spending (after inflation) grew by 41 percent, outpacing population growth by 12 percentage points. In Nevada, spending grew by 70 percent, outpacing population growth by 40 unbelievable percentage points. Only Florida managed to keep general spending growth roughly in line with population growth. But that state kept its population growth artificially high—and its spending growth artificially low—by using its state-guaranteed property-insurance program to subsidize torrid real-estate development in natural-disaster-prone areas where people otherwise would never have been able to afford to live. When disaster strikes, as it must, Florida—and the rest of us—could be on the line for billions of dollars.

Some of the states' spending was the necessary consequence of rapid population growth. Take Queen Creek, where city officials had to build a "community from the ground up"—in the words of Mayor Art Sanders, himself a real-estate developer—including a lot of public-sector infrastructure. For example, Queen Creek homeowners formerly paid a private firefighting company for coverage. As the town expanded, however, it wanted to participate in a local program through which neighboring towns' firefighters would help one another out. But a combination of state regulations and its own recalcitrance kept the firefighting firm from participating in the program, and it didn't provide stellar service anyway, Sanders says. So Queen Creek created its own public fire department and funded it with a new property tax.

Similarly, the town has built a state-of-the-art library that looks more like a Barnes & Noble, where kids and adults take advantage of the late hours to read after work and school. Sanders doesn't seem to prefer the public sector to the private sector for any particular task. But some basic service functions seem invariably to gravitate to the public sector, as the population evolves from a few farmers with their own informal network of services to individual homeowners, often from out of state, who expect the government to provide such services and much more.

Yet most of the three states' dizzying spending isn't the consequence of new public services required by new towns. It's instead due to those culprits familiar to budget hawks on the East and West Coasts: education and health care. In Arizona, for example, education spending is up 32 percent in the past four years alone, outpacing the rest of the budget, says Byron Schlomach, director of the Center for Economic Prosperity at the Goldwater Institute. (Among other things, the spending pays for a new full-day kindergarten program for public school students.) Health care has more than held its own, too, as former governor Janet Napolitano tried diligently to expand Medicaid eligibility to middle-class

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families. Education spending in Nevada has more than doubled in real terms since 2000, also outpacing general spending, with hundreds of millions earmarked for class-size reduction.

With tax revenues plunging by double-digit percentages in all three states—nearly three times as fast as the national average, according to the Rockefeller Institute—all this spending has left budgets dangerously out of whack. Florida's deficit is 23 percent of its general budget; Nevada's and Arizona's are more than 30 percent. In fact, Florida, one of only 11 states with a sterling AAA rating from Standard & Poor's, is in danger of losing that rating.

"Over the past decade, Nevada's public employees have won huge raises (more than 8 percent annually, in some cases)."

Further, Arizona and Nevada, while ramping up spending, have failed to fund future pension liabilities—payments that they must make to future state retirees, so that they're consistent with the national average. Arizona has funded only 79 percent of its future payments, while Nevada has funded 77 percent. (Florida, to its credit, has actually overfunded its plan.) True, these shortfalls aren't huge compared with the 82 percent national average. But neither are they signs of fiscal stewardship, a particularly troubling fact in Nevada, where the number of state retirees has nearly doubled in the past decade.

The three states have faced wrenching debates about how to close this year's budget gaps. Only Florida has passed a budget without new taxes. But it did so mostly with one-shot gimmicks that make future problems worse, like raiding a byzantine array of reserve trust funds. As the state's budget hole gapes again, the legislature has floated the idea of new fees and a cigarette-tax hike, and even these steps may not be enough. Governor Charlie Crist, a Republican, has resisted new levies so far, but he's almost out of one-shot budget tricks. That may be why he was one of the Republicans who adamantly supported President Obama's health-and-education-heavy stimulus package. That money may save him from a massive tax increase—for now.

Nevada and Arizona, though, after modest budget cuts, are raising taxes with zeal. In mid-March, Nevada's legislature hit its economy where it hurts, enacting a hotel-tax increase initially meant to raise nearly $300 million annually (plummeting tourism brought that projection down to $233 million). Republican governor Jim Gibbons has made a show of not endorsing the increase—but as the legislators who voted for it have grumbled, the hike was in *his* proposed budget, and it doesn't require his signature to become law. Geoffrey Lawrence, a fiscal-policy analyst at the Nevada Policy Research Institute, worries that more new levies are coming and that the state is gearing up for a repeat of 2003, when it passed the biggest tax increase in state history. Once the economy started growing, Lawrence remembers, the state "used that money to expand programs."

And in Arizona, new Republican governor Jan Brewer has proposed $1 billion in as-yet-vague tax hikes, including a possible boost in the sales tax. She has also floated the idea of permanently repealing a currently suspended state property tax sometime in the future—in exchange for a temporary *return* of the tax now. It's a political convolution that would make New York Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver proud.

Why haven't the JetBlue states reduced spending when faced with the downturn, instead of turning to new taxes? A big reason is the growing power of special interests that depend on taxpayer dollars, making these once-frugal states look a bit more like California and New York. Over the past decade, for instance, notes Lawrence, Nevada's public employees have won jaw-dropping raises (more than 8 percent annually, in some cases) and now balk at

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giving any of them back—though county officials have had some success here. The Nevada teachers' union spearheaded the recent hotel-tax hike, which includes a long-fused budget bomb: for the first two years, it will support general spending and close the deficit, but afterward it will support permanently higher teacher pay.

The special interests have become adept at weaving lavish spending deeply into state budgets in good times, so that it's hard to cut when times get tight. In 2000, to take one example, Arizona approved a new sales tax, specifically for providing extra funding for education. Back then, with the economy booming, it didn't seem like a big deal. But as revenue from the dedicated sales tax falls with the struggling economy, education advocates will complain and the state will be tempted to subsidize the shortfall with other taxes—turning a separate, dedicated tax into a more general claim on the state budget. In Florida, advocates want state funds to make up for education funding shortfalls at the county level, which would bring the state a step closer to New York's ruinous arrangement: massive state subsidies for education, which encourage local governments to jack up their own spending, knowing that someone else will pay for it.

The political culture of the three states seems to be transforming, too, making them friendlier to the "spending lobby," as Schlomach calls it. Arizona, the only one of the three states with an income tax, now seems to have plenty of supporters for raising that tax. One unscientific poll in the *Arizona Daily Star* found a majority of respondents in favor of such an increase, including an Albany-style tax hike on the "rich"—those making more than $150,000 annually. And Florida has seen Albany-style organized protests against even modest education cuts.

Both Lawrence and Schlomach believe that demography has a lot to do with this shift. "The biggest risk is Californians moving here," says Schlomach. "They are fleeing California, but they don't have any notion of why it's expensive to live there." They don't realize that part of the reason it's still "not super-expensive here" is the relatively small extent of government services, he adds. Echoes Lawrence: much of the population increase into Nevada is from California, and "they're taking their voting culture with them."

Besides immediate, massive budget deficits born of boom-era spending, the frontier states face additional challenges, familiar to residents of older states. One involves infrastructure reinvestment. When high-growth states invest in brand-new infrastructure, they can be confident that new tax revenues—from the new development that the infrastructure will support—will pay for it. But it's another thing altogether to keep investing in the same old infrastructure just to maintain your current tax revenues and prevent your existing residents and businesses from fleeing, as states like New York and California must do.

For the first time, in many cases, the JetBlue states must do this work of reinvesting in aging infrastructure. The American Waterworks Association has said of Arizona's vast water-infrastructure needs that the state now faces the "dawn of the replacement era." The American Society of Civil Engineers said last year that "much of Florida's flood-control infrastructure is reaching its life expectancy." And all three states face massive transportation-investment decisions in the coming decades, as exurban traffic in far-flung developments worsens.

Another old-state problem that the three Sunbelt states must soon confront is social spending. Mass foreclosures are leaving neighborhoods vulnerable to lasting economic and social change. Robert Allen, an Arizonan who just last year turned what was a construction-support company into a business cleaning out foreclosed houses for banks and property managers, says that he's already noticed a quality-of-life decline in some parts of Mesa and outlying suburbs. Mass foreclosures encourage vandalism and burglaries, and blight drives away potential newcomers; owner-occupied neighborhoods are turning into rentals. One police station in a foreclosure-wracked area of Gilbert, a bedroom community of Phoenix, has seen a 46 percent increase in calls, according to the *Arizona Republic*.

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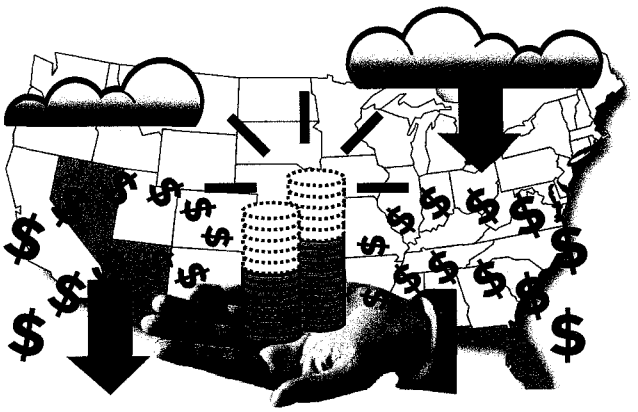
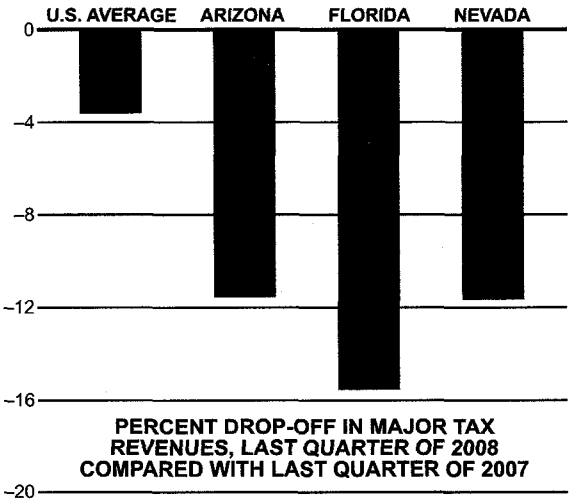
Most neighborhoods aren't in such dire straits, thankfully. Some, in fact, are close-knit enough to guard empty houses themselves and pay the electricity bills to deter vandals. But foreclosures could still force the government to spend lots more on certain suburban neighborhoods, especially on policing—making them net consumers, not payers, of taxes.

For now, Nevada can still run full-page ads in California's papers trumpeting its no-income-tax living. And Arizona's freedom-loving culture suggests that it won't be turning fully to Gotham-style big government any time soon. When I asked various people there how the government ought to help, nobody advocated mass-scale homeowner bailouts. Sanders, the mayor of Queen Creek, didn't cry about foreclosures in his town, grumble about plummeting property-tax revenues, or ask for government money. Many Arizonans seem to have acquired a new understanding of how markets work, rather than a new distrust of them. As Marylee Bell, a Queen Creek restaurant owner, says, "It makes sense for people who overpaid to lose their homes and rent them back from people who didn't." (Bell's idea for an improved economic bailout plan from the White House: "Cut taxes.") Stories are also starting to emerge of people who just purchased a house for $189,000 that had sold two years ago for $425,000.



. . . AND PLUMMETING REVENUES TEMPT LOW-TAX STATES TO HIKE RATES.



PERCENT DROP-OFF IN MAJOR TAX REVENUES, LAST QUARTER OF 2008 COMPARED WITH LAST QUARTER OF 2007

SOURCE: Author's calculations based on Rockefeller Institute data

Further, Allen notes that many of his neighbors have started new businesses as the economy has stagnated. The long-booming construction industry, so reliant on independent contractors, encouraged a culture of self-employment. And more than a few people who caught the speculative fever in Arizona and Nevada have software or other professional backgrounds from California and elsewhere, meaning that they have the tools to start nonhousing businesses in their new home states.

Demographically, too, the frontier states' future still seems fundamentally sound, if based less on scorching growth in people and property values. If the past 200 years are any guide, the nation will keep getting bigger, and people will still seek cheaper places to live, something that Arizona, Florida, and Nevada have on offer once again.

But the low-tax, low-services culture is up against a potent force: the inexorable mathematics of budgets that take on a life of their own once they've passed the point of no return. If the way that Arizona, Florida, and Nevada are confronting the current crisis is any guide, these states will continue to grow—but they will also grow a little bit more like us.

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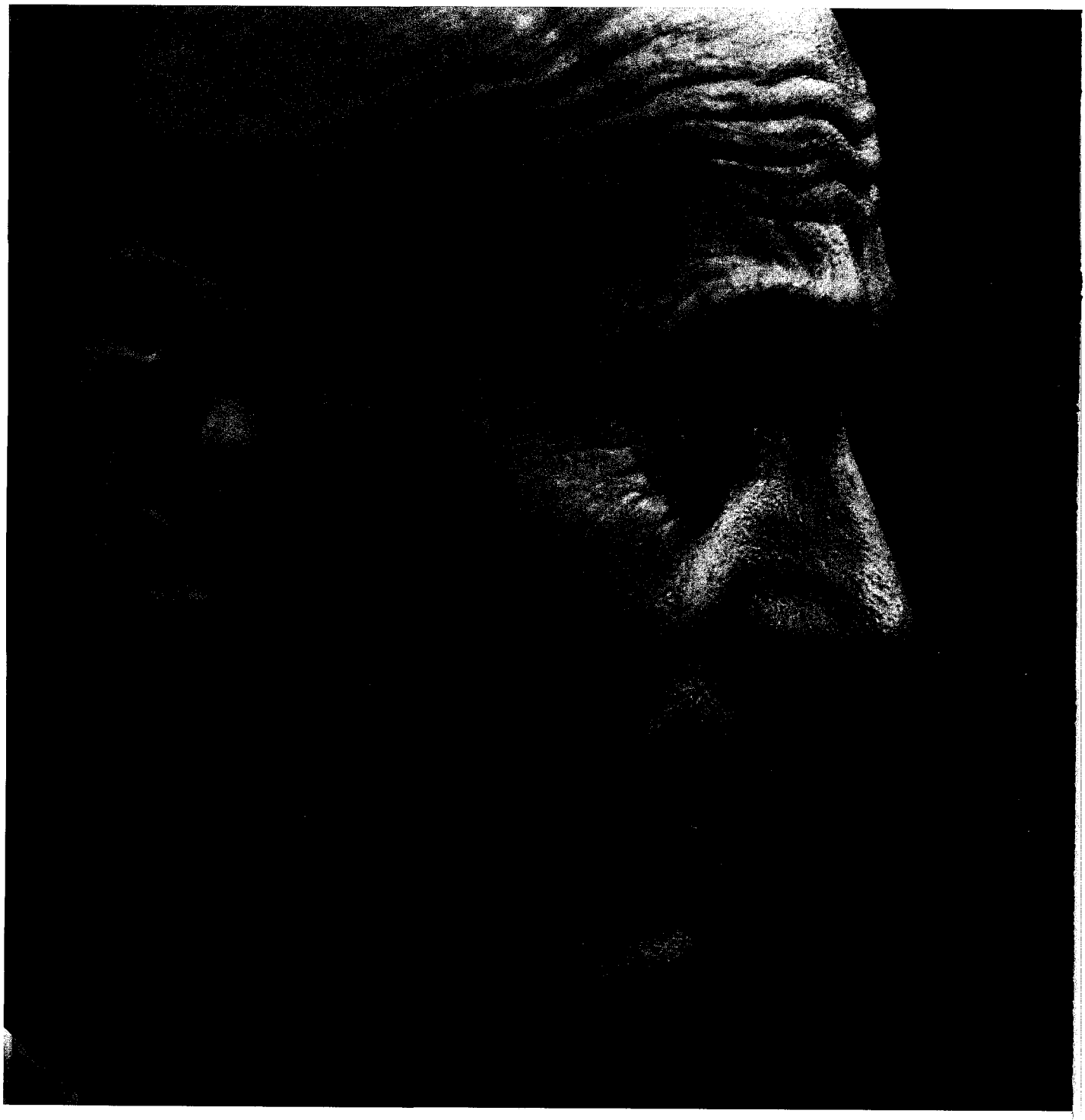
Heirs to Fortuyn?



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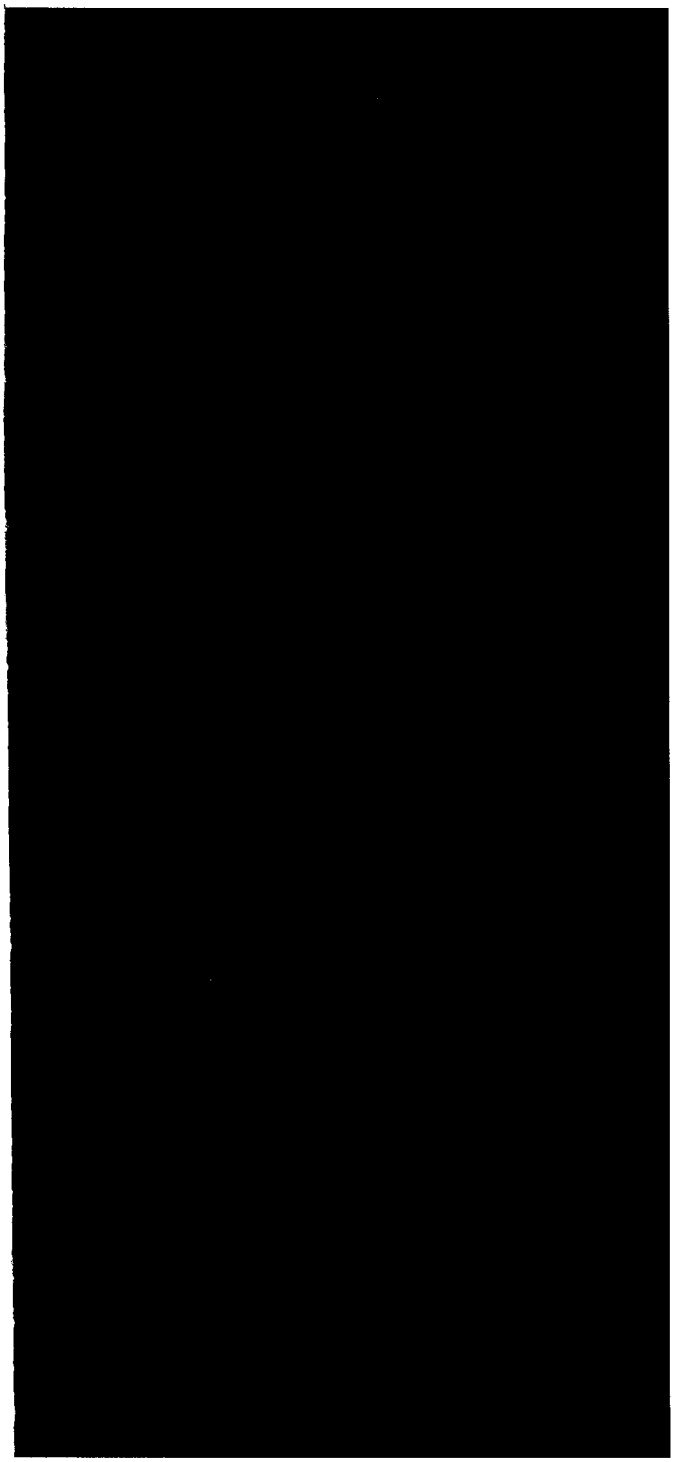

ROBIN UTRECHT/ANP FILES/EPA/CORBIS

Muslim immigration and sclerotic welfare states push Europe right (sort of).

Bruce Bawer

When the New Left emerged in the 1960s, something else was born that would mark American elites for decades thereafter: the notion that social-democratic Western Europe was far superior to the capitalist United States. Pity the poor American professor whose every junket to a European academic conference was marred by his continental colleagues' sneering over cocktails about his nation's shame du jour—Vietnam, Watergate, Iraq—or about American racism, capital punishment, or health care. For much of the

Before he was assassinated, Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn rose to prominence with his outspoken opposition to Islamic extremism.

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American Left, Western Europe was nothing less than an abstract symbol of progressive utopia.

This rosy view was never accurate, of course. Europe's socialized health care was blighted by outrageous (and sometimes deadly) waiting lists and rationing, to name just one example. To name another: Timbro, a Swedish think tank, found in 2004 that Sweden was poorer than all but five U.S. states and Denmark poorer than all but nine. But in recent years, something has happened to complicate the Left's fanciful picture even further: Western European voters' widespread reaction against social democracy.

The shift has two principal, and related, causes. The more significant one is that over the last three decades, social-democratic Europe's political, cultural, academic, and media elites have presided over, and vigorously defended, a vast wave of immigration from the Muslim world—the largest such influx in human history. According to *Foreign Affairs*, Muslims in Western Europe numbered between 15 and 20 million in 2005. One source estimates that Britain's Muslim population rose from about 82,000 in 1961 to 553,000 in 1981 to 2 million in 2000—a demographic change roughly representative of Western Europe as a whole during that period. According to the London *Times*, the number of Muslims in the U.K. climbed by half a million between 2004 and 2008 alone—a rate of growth ten times that of the rest of that country's population.

Yet instead of encouraging these immigrants to integrate and become part of their new societies, Western Europe's governments have allowed them to form self-segregating parallel societies run more or less according to sharia. Many of the residents of these patriarchal enclaves subsist on government benefits, speak the language of their adopted country poorly or not at all, despise pluralistic democracy, look forward to Europe's incorporation into the House of Islam, and support—at least in spirit—terrorism against the West. A 2006 *Sunday Telegraph* poll, for example, showed that 40 percent of British Muslims wanted sharia in Britain, 14 percent approved of attacks on Danish embassies in retribution for the famous Mohammed cartoons, 13 percent supported violence against those who insulted Islam, and 20 percent sympathized with the July 2005 London bombers.

Too often, such attitudes find their way into practice. Ubiquitous youth gangs, contemptuous of infidels, have made European cities increasingly dangerous for non-Muslims—especially women, Jews, and gays. In 2001, 65 percent of rapes in Norway were committed by what the country's police call "non-Western" men—a category consisting overwhelmingly of Muslims, who make up just 2 percent of that country's population. In 2005, 82 percent of crimes in Copenhagen were committed by members of immigrant groups, the majority of them Muslims.

Non-Muslims aren't the only targets of Muslim violence. A mountain of evidence suggests that the rates of domestic abuse in these enclaves are astronomical. In Germany, reports *Der Spiegel*, "a disproportionately high percentage of women who flee to women's shelters are Muslim"; in 2006, 56 percent of the women at Norwegian shelters were of foreign origin; Deborah Scroggins wrote in *The Nation* in 2005 that "Muslims make up only 5.5 percent of the Dutch population, but they account for more than half the women in battered women's shelters." Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the Somali-Dutch advocate for democracy and women's rights, would no doubt say *far* more than half: when she was working with women in Dutch shelters, she writes, "there were hardly any white women" in them, "only women from Morocco, from Turkey, from Afghanistan—Muslim countries—alongside some Hindu women from Surinam." When she and filmmaker Theo van Gogh tried to highlight the mistreatment of women under Islam in the 2004 film *Submission: Part I*, he was killed by a young Muslim extremist.

More and more Western Europeans, recognizing the threat to their safety and way of life, have turned their backs on the establishment, which has done little or nothing to address these problems, and begun voting for parties—some relatively new, and all considered right-wing—that have dared to speak up about them.

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One measure of the dimensions of this shift: owing to the rise in gay-bashings by Muslim youths, Dutch gays—who ten years ago constituted a reliable left-wing voting bloc—now support conservative parties by a nearly two-to-one margin.

The other major reason for the turn against the Left is economic. Western Europeans have long paid sky-high taxes for a social safety net that seems increasingly not worth the price. These taxes have slowed economic growth. Timbro's Johnny Munkhammar noted in 2005 that Sweden, for instance, which in the first half of the twentieth century had the world's second-highest growth rate, had since fallen to number 14, owing to enormous tax hikes.

"Western Europe's governments have allowed Muslim immigrants to form self-segregating parallel societies."

Government revenues in Western Europe go largely to support the unemployed, thus discouraging work. Over the last decade or so, the overall unemployment rate in the EU 15—that is, Western Europe—has hovered at about 2.5 to 3 points higher than in the United States. In France and Germany, it has ascended into the double digits (and that was before the global financial crisis that began in 2008). Western Europe's rate of long-term unemployment has consistently been several times higher than America's, denoting the presence of a sizable minority either permanently jobless or working off the books, often for family businesses, while collecting unemployment benefits.

These two factors—immigration and the economy—are intimately connected. For while some immigrant groups in Europe, such as Hindus and East Asians, enjoy relatively low unemployment rates and healthy incomes, the largest immigrant group, Muslims, has become such a burden that governments have made extensive cutbacks in public services in order to keep up with welfare payments—closing clinics and emergency rooms, reducing staff in hospitals, cutting police and military spending, eliminating course offerings at public universities, and so on. According to a report issued last year by the think tank Contribuables Associés, immigration reduces France's GNP by two-thirds and costs the government about $110 billion a year. In 2002, economist Lars Jansson estimated that immigration cost Swedish taxpayers about $27 billion annually and that fully 74 percent of immigrant-group members in Sweden lived off the taxpayers. And in 2006, the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise warned that Norway's petroleum fund—which contains the massive profits from North Sea oil that have made the nation rich—could wind up drained to cover outlays to immigrants. (This in a country whose roads, as a report last year indicated, are in worse shape than Albania's.)

The last few decades in Europe have made three things crystal-clear. First, social-democratic welfare systems work best, to the extent they do work, in ethnically and culturally homogeneous (and preferably small) nations whose citizens, viewing one another as members of an extended family, are loath to exploit government provisions for the needy. Second, the best way to destroy such welfare systems is to take in large numbers of immigrants from poor, oppressive, and corruption-ridden societies, whose rule of the road is to grab everything you can get your hands on. And third, the system will be wiped out even faster if many of those immigrants are fundamentalist Muslims who view bankrupting the West as a contribution to jihad. Add to all this the growing power of an unelected European Union bureaucracy that has encouraged Muslim immigration and taken steps to punish criticism of it—criminalizing "incitement of racism, xenophobia, or hatred against a racial, ethnic, or religious group" in 2007, for example—and you can start to understand why

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Heirs to Fortuyn?

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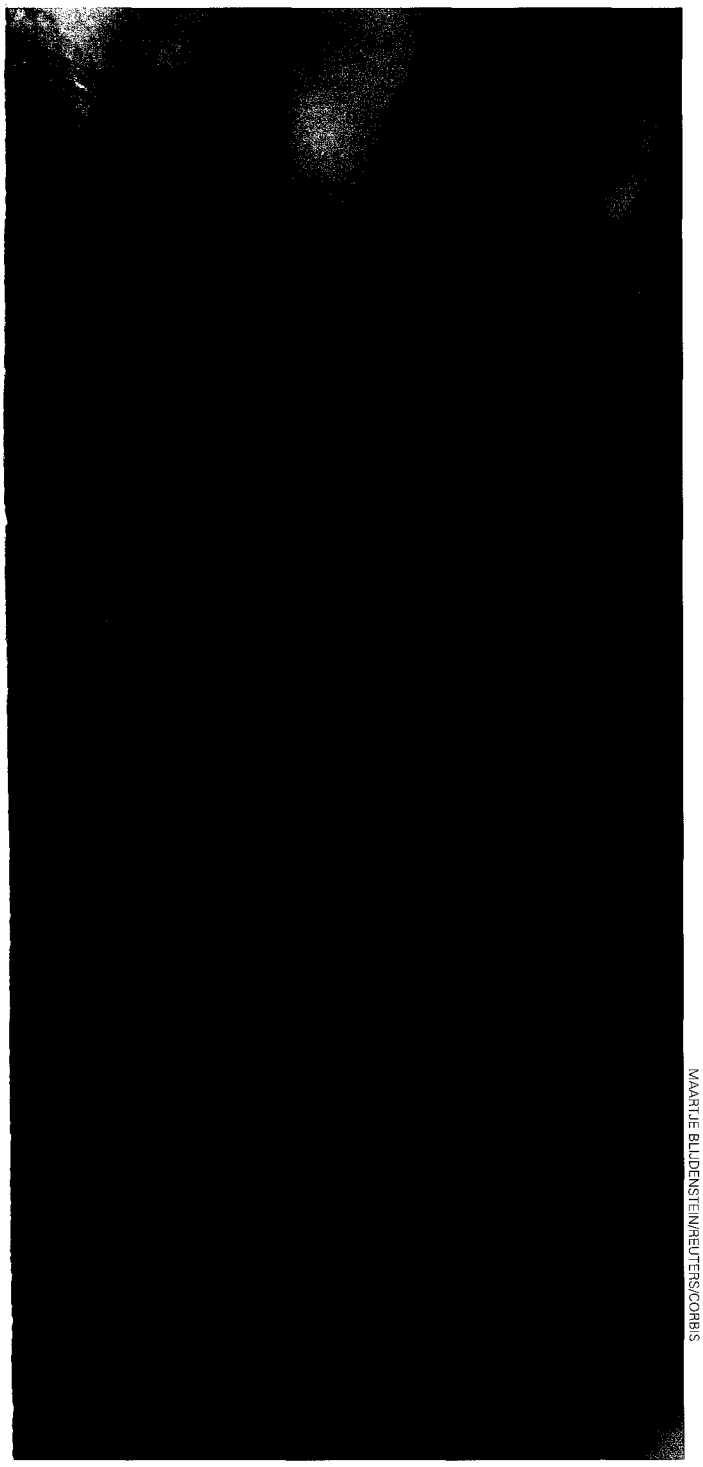

MAARTJE BLUDENSTEIN/REUTERS/CORBIS

A woman mourns Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, whose murder by a Muslim fanatic sparked outrage in the Netherlands.

Western Europeans who prize their freedoms are resisting the so-called leadership of their see-no-evil elites.

The November 2001 general election in Denmark is the most decisive—and successful—rejection so far of a Western European left-wing establishment. Alarmed by a widely publicized study showing that their country would have a Muslim majority within 60 years if immigration rates didn't change, Danish voters sent the Social Democrats down to defeat for the first time since 1924. The new Liberal-Conservative governing coalition, which voters returned to power in 2005, has introduced the continent's most sweeping immigration and integration reforms, including rules designed to thwart the near-universal practice in Europe's Muslim communities of marrying one's children off to cousins abroad so that they, too, may immigrate to the West. As a result, the flow of new Muslim arrivals has decreased significantly, allowing the government to focus resources on the immense challenge of trying to integrate Muslims already living in Denmark. Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen also defended free speech strongly during the 2006 Mohammed cartoon crisis, standing firm while Muslims around the world raged against Denmark and Western leaders begged him to back down.

The rightward shifts in Europe most widely reported in the U.S. have been those in Germany, where Angela Merkel became chancellor in 2005, and in France, where Nicolas Sarkozy took over the presidency in 2007. Those developments, as well as the third term that Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi won in 2008, were grounded largely in public recognition of the need for economic liberalization. By French standards, Sarkozy's campaign rhetoric was nothing less than stunning: arguing that "the revolution of 1968"—a sacred event for the left-wing French establishment—had not liberated

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France but "brought us into moral decline," Sarkozy insisted that if the French wanted growth, they needed to spend less time in cafés and more on the job.

In brave little Denmark's backyard, two more countries have moved to the right. In Norway, the Progress Party—which the political and media establishment has smeared for a generation as racist and fiscally unserious—now rivals the Labor Party, architect of the country's welfare state, thanks to voter concerns about immigration and public services. Though the financial crisis had caused support for the Progress Party to slip a bit, recent Muslim riots and debates about *hijab* have sent poll numbers skyward again, and the party seems a good bet to come out on top in next September's parliamentary elections—though it will be in trouble if, as appears likely, other right-of-center parties refuse to join a Progress Party–led coalition. And in Sweden, perhaps the ultimate symbol of social democracy, voters motivated largely by concerns over unemployment and other economic issues unseated the long-powerful Social Democratic Party in 2006. In its place they installed a center-right coalition led by Fredrik Reinfeldt's Moderates, who promised to help businesses and lower taxes.

But demonstrating a distinctively European species of schizophrenia, many on both the right and the left, while acknowledging the need for welfare-state reorganization, have ultimately resisted it—as if the philosophical leap required were simply too great. In Western Europe, after all, even the mainstream Right tends to be statist. "The concept of the cradle-to-grave welfare state is so deeply embedded in the Danish psyche that even the conservatives don't dare touch it," noted NPR correspondent Sylvia Poggioli in 2006. Ivo H. Daalder made the same point in a 2007 Brookings Institution report, writing that "when one talks about the right in Europe, you are talking about a very state interventionist political class that still believes that the government has a fundamental role in guiding how the economy is supposed to be run."

It's no surprise, then, that Europe's new leaders have made relatively modest economic changes. True, Sarkozy has raised state employees' retirement age (precipitating a transport strike) and ended France's 35-hour workweek. But from the start, Social Democrats in Germany, whom Merkel's slim margin of victory forced her to accept as coalition partners, have limited her ability to implement serious economic reforms. In April 2008, Judy Dempsey noted in the *International Herald Tribune* not only that the coalition had "run its course" but that Merkel herself had been "forced to move leftward," hiking pensions and "rolling back radical labor reforms, ironically introduced by her Social Democratic predecessor, Gerhard Schröder, which were designed to bring older people back to work by reducing social welfare payments." And with the onset of the economic crisis, notes German author Henryk Broder, "there is even an ongoing discussion about *Enteignung* [expropriation] and *Verstaatlichung* [nationalization], which was unthinkable a year ago."

As for Sweden, shortly after the 2006 victory, *BusinessWeek* writers Stanley Reed and Ariane Sains paraphrased Reinfeldt as saying that his "idea isn't to dismantle the cherished Swedish welfare state. . . . That would be too controversial." Reinfeldt's one major innovation has been a "partially successful" effort "to force people off the welfare rolls and into the labor market," University of Lund social thinker Jonathan Friedman tells me. Reinfeldt's economic plan has also involved increased privatization, somewhat lower taxes, and encouragement of entrepreneurship—all policies, as Friedman notes, "that were started by the previous government."

Meanwhile, with the notable exception of Denmark, the new nonsocialist governments have left their predecessors' disastrous immigration and integration policies almost entirely intact. Sarkozy's defiant campaign rhetoric about Muslim rioters in the suburbs raised hopes for major change. But though he announced last July that illegal immigration would be a major focus during France's EU presidency, he has done little even about *legal* immigration, most of which, in Western Europe, involves the importation of new spouses in arranged, usually

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forced, marriages. Sarkozy seems to believe that job creation and other economic measures will resolve France's colossal integration challenges.

Merkel, meanwhile, shone briefly when she insisted that the Deutsche Oper proceed with a 2006 production of Mozart's *Idomeneo* that Muslim leaders condemned as offensive. But the heavily hyped "national integration plan" that she introduced the following year rested on such half-measures as an increase in the number of government-sponsored German classes, an effort to encourage immigrants to play sports, and (incredibly) a program that addressed wife-beating—permitted by the Koran and extremely common in Muslim communities—by offering advice on the Internet. Merkel actually described these pathetic gestures as a "milestone"; Broder, more accurately, calls them "make-believe action," another way to avoid conflicts in her coalition.

"In Sweden, perhaps the ultimate symbol of social democracy, voters have installed a center-right coalition."

In Sweden, says Friedman, Reinfeldt has pursued "a variant of politics as usual" on immigration and integration. Lars Hedegaard, president of the International Free Press Society, insists that Swedish efforts to encourage employment "will undoubtedly prove ineffective over the long haul" because "the fundamental problem is demographics. Sweden remains Europe's main importer of Muslim immigrants who are unwilling to assimilate and whose imams order them to detest Swedish culture. So long as the current government is unwilling to tackle this basic problem, everything else will be for naught."

Sarkozy has undertaken one high-profile initiative, which seems disastrously ill-conceived in a uniquely Gallic way: developing closer, more formal ties between France and the Arab countries from which it receives most of its immigrants. At one point, he even spoke of a "Mediterranean Union." *Haaretz* writer Michalis Firillas summed up Sarkozy's plan tidily in January 2008: "For some, his Mediterranean Union is a containment policy. For others it is neo-colonial. But there is also a sense that Sarkozy is betting on French grandeur, that aura of greatness, to bridge the disparate Mediterranean with a new and serious political body. Unfortunately, he may find that there are others with similar visions of grandeur, from Ankara to Cairo, from Jerusalem to Tangiers, who have their own Mediterranean visions." Indeed, Sarkozy's scheme appears to be a continuation of his left-wing predecessors' efforts to bring the Arab world under French influence—efforts that ended up subsidizing the colonization of French suburbs by Arabs who now consider them part of the House of Islam.

Not only has Europe's move to the right not always had concrete results; it also hasn't been an across-the-board phenomenon. In Britain, the Tories seem poised to resume power after Labour's long, slow decline. Yet the ideological gap between the parties has narrowed so much in recent years, and the leadership vacuum is so pronounced, that it's difficult to imagine a Tory takeover's having an impact remotely comparable with that of Margaret Thatcher's 1979 election. On the contrary, conservative columnist Peter Hitchens recently charged that nowadays "you cannot become the government unless you bow to the views of the 'Centre-Left' media elite, especially the broadcast media elite." That elite, alas—as vividly demonstrated last year by the archbishop of Canterbury's speech contemplating the legitimacy of sharia in parts of Britain—is bent on appeasing fundamentalist Islam.

And Spain, in a move widely seen as capitulating to Islamists, responded to the March 2004 terrorist attacks in Madrid by voting for José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's Socialist Party, which had vowed to withdraw troops from Iraq immediately. Zapatero narrowly won reelection last year. As libertarian columnist Antonio

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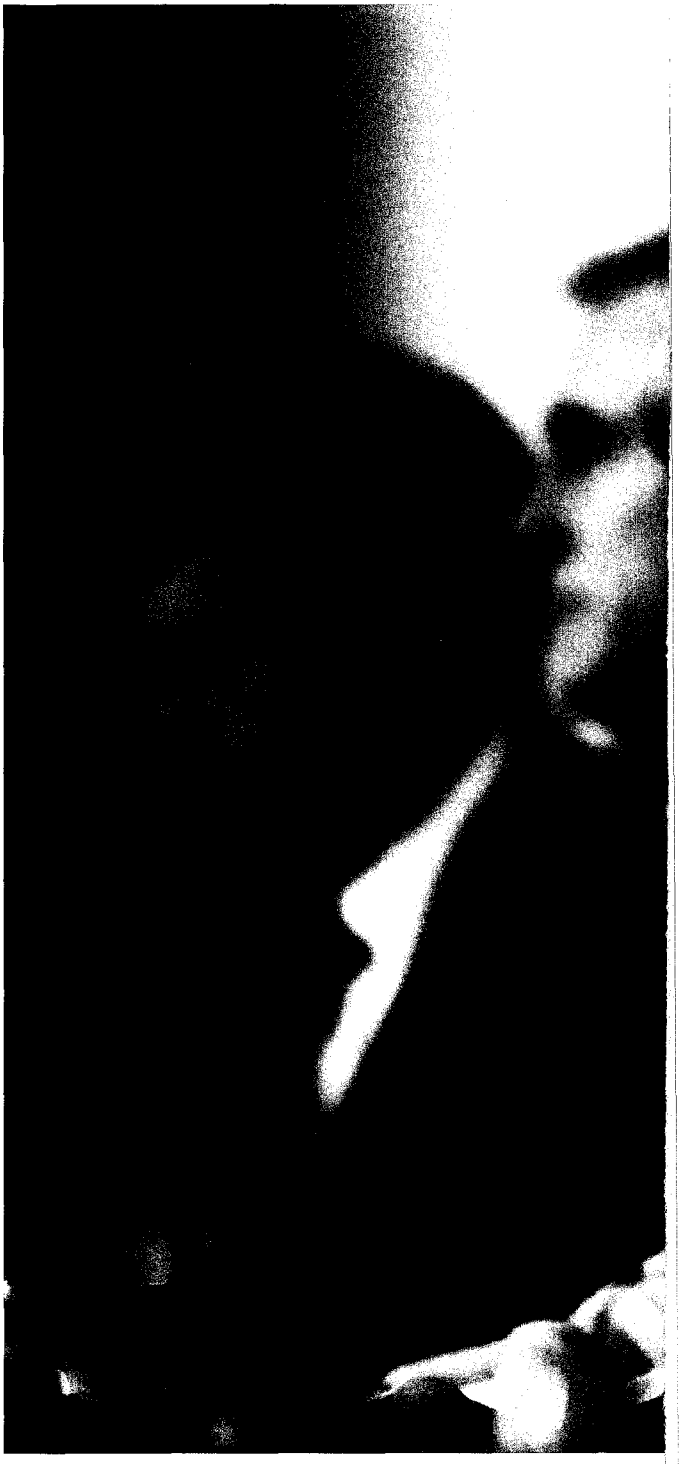
Golmar explains, the centrist consensus established after King Juan Carlos's introduction of democracy in the seventies has been shattered by Zapatero's hard-left initiatives. These include the Historical Memory Law—which portrays leftist mass murderers during the Spanish civil war as heroic freedom fighters, while stigmatizing many of their innocent victims as fascists—and the introduction in all schools of "citizenship" classes that teach scorn for capitalism and representative democracy.

In response, some Spaniards have lurched rightward toward the national-Catholic, proto-fascist ideology of Franco's time and become increasingly vocal within the conservative Partido Popular. Consequently, says Golmar, "moderates in Spain are trapped between a far-left administration and their cronies and the revival of the extreme right disguised in conservative and even libertarian clothing." While America struggles to move beyond the antagonisms of the 1960s, then, Spain has entered an ideological battlefield reminiscent of the years preceding its civil war of the late thirties. There seems little room for those who loathe both the neo-Marxists and the neoreactionaries.

The situation in Spain is a reminder that not all "right turns" are created equal. If the Danes have affirmed individual liberty, human rights, sexual equality, the rule of law, and freedom of speech and religion, some Western Europeans have reacted to the mindless multiculturalism of their socialist leaders by embracing alternatives that seem uncomfortably close to fascism. Consider Austria's recently deceased Jörg Haider, who belittled the Holocaust, honored Waffen-SS veterans, and found things to praise about Nazism. In 2000, his Freedom Party became part of a coalition government, leading the rest of the EU to isolate Austria diplomatically for a time, and last September, his new party, the Alliance for the Future of Austria,



URBAN MARCO/SIPA

Europe's new right-of-center political alignment: German chancellor Angela Merkel, French president Nicolas Sarkozy, and Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi

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won 11 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections. Or take Jean-Marie Le Pen, who has called the Holocaust "a detail in the history of World War II" and advocated the forced quarantining of people who test HIV-positive—and whose far-right National Front came out on top in the first round of voting for the French presidency in 2002. The British National Party (BNP), which has a whites-only membership policy and has flatly denied the Holocaust, won more than 5 percent of the vote in London's last mayoral election. Then there's Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest), formerly Vlaams Bloc, whose leaders have a regrettable tendency to be caught on film singing Nazi songs and buying Nazi books. In 2007, it won five out of 40 seats in the Belgian Senate.

For establishment politicians, journalists, and academics, these parties serve an exceedingly useful purpose: their existence makes it easy to tar *any* nonsocialist party with the fascist brush—labeling it racist and xenophobic, equating its leaders with the likes of Le Pen and Haider, and stigmatizing its supporters. No party in Europe has been subjected to more unfair attacks than Norway's Progress Party, whose extraordinary electoral successes have outraged that country's socialist elite. Like other parties on what we may call Europe's respectable right, the Progress Party has expressly distanced itself from parties like the National Front and Vlaams Belang. Yet despite these disavowals, American media have routinely echoed the leftist establishment's unjust calumnies.

A seminal example was a March 2002 *New York Times* article by Marlise Simons about Pim Fortuyn, the Dutch politician who, according to the article's headline, was PROUDLY GAY, AND MARCHING THE DUTCH TO THE RIGHT. Though Simons acknowledged that Fortuyn criticized Islam because it offered "no equality for men and women and because . . . the imams here preach in offensive terms about gays," she nonetheless echoed the Dutch establishment's characterization of him as a menace to Dutch values, making sure to mention that he had been widely compared with Mussolini and Haider. A few weeks later, Fortuyn was murdered by an environmental fanatic taken in by similar claptrap.

The same kind of incendiary rhetoric that Dutch journalists used against Fortuyn can now be seen in American left-wing coverage of any nonsocialist European party or politician. Typical was Gary Younge's 2007 piece in *The Nation*: IN EUROPE, IT'S THE OLD RIGHT THAT'S FULL OF HATE. According to Younge, "the primary threat to democracy in Europe is not 'Islamofascism' . . . but plain old fascism. The kind whereby mostly white Europeans take to the streets to terrorize minorities." This was nonsense on a breathtaking scale: though the rise of parties like the BNP is indeed distressing, the truth remains that for every act of anti-Muslim violence in Europe, there are—to make an exceedingly conservative guess—100 acts of Muslim-on-infidel violence.

Who will win the war for the soul of Western Europe? The Islamofascists and their multiculturalist appeasers, many of whom seem to believe that their job is not to defend democracy but to help make the transition to sharia as smooth as possible? The nativist cryptofascists? Or Pim Fortuyn's freedom-loving heirs? Interestingly, while Western Europeans have been heading in one direction, Americans have chosen to go the other way, replacing a president more loathed by the European elite than any in history with a man whom the same elite has celebrated to an unprecedented degree, often depicting his election as a mystical act of atonement for all of America's past sins, real or imagined.

The final question, then, is whether the Western European Left's condescension toward America, and the American Left's habit of holding Western Europe up as a socialist paradise, can survive the combination of Europe's right turn and the elevation of Barack Obama. Stir in the international financial crisis, which will almost certainly cause a socioeconomic upheaval of untold dimensions in both hemispheres, and it seems reasonable to expect that the old pattern may be broken for good. Meaning that American professors will have a far less stressful time of it at European cocktail parties—at least until sharia comes along and forbids cocktails entirely. ▩

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Pedagogy of the Oppressor

Another reason why U.S. ed schools are so awful: the ongoing influence of Brazilian Marxist Paulo Freire

Sol Stern

Like the more famous Teach for America, the New York Teaching Fellows program provides an alternate route to state certification for about 1,700 new teachers annually. When I met with a group of the fellows taking a required class at a school of education last summer, we began by discussing education reform, but the conversation soon took a turn, with many recounting one horror story after another from their rocky first year: chaotic classrooms, indifferent administrators, veteran teachers who rarely offered a helping hand. You might expect the required readings for these struggling rookies to contain good practical tips on classroom management, say, or sensible advice on teaching reading to disadvantaged students. Instead, the one book that the fellows had to read in full was *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire.

For anyone familiar with American schools of education, the choice wasn't surprising. Since the publication of the English edition in 1970, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has achieved near-iconic status in America's teacher-training programs. In 2003, David Steiner and Susan Rozen published a study examining the curricula of 16 schools of education—14 of them among the top-ranked institutions in the country, according to *U.S. News and World Report*—and found that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was one of the most frequently assigned texts in their philosophy of education courses. These course assignments are undoubtedly part of the reason that, according to the publisher, almost 1 million copies have sold, a remarkable number for a book in the education field.

The odd thing is that Freire's magnum opus isn't, in the end, *about* education—certainly not the education of children. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* mentions none of the issues that troubled education reformers throughout the twentieth century: testing, standards, curriculum, the role of parents, how to organize schools, what subjects should be taught in various grades, how best to train teachers, the most effective way of teaching disadvantaged

Illustrations by Arnold Roth

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students. This ed-school bestseller is, instead, a utopian political tract calling for the overthrow of capitalist hegemony and the creation of classless societies. Teachers who adopt its pernicious ideas risk harming their students—and ironically, their most disadvantaged students will suffer the most.

To get an idea of the book's priorities, take a look at its footnotes. Freire isn't interested in the Western tradition's leading education thinkers—not Rousseau, not Piaget, not John Dewey, not Horace Mann, not Maria Montessori. He cites a rather different set of figures: Marx, Lenin, Mao, Che Guevara, and Fidel Castro, as well as the radical intellectuals Frantz Fanon, Régis Debray, Herbert Marcuse, Jean-Paul Sartre, Louis Althusser, and Georg Lukács. And no wonder, since Freire's main idea is that the central contradiction of every society is between the "oppressors" and the "oppressed" and that revolution should resolve their conflict. The "oppressed" are, moreover, destined to develop a "pedagogy" that leads them to their own liberation. Here, in a key passage, is how Freire explains this emancipatory project:

> The pedagogy of the oppressed [is] a pedagogy which must be forged with, not for, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. And in the struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade.

As the passage makes clear, Freire never intends "pedagogy" to refer to any method of classroom instruction based on analysis and research, or to any means of producing higher academic achievement for students. He has bigger fish to fry. His idiosyncratic theory of schooling refers only to the growing self-awareness of exploited workers and peasants who are "unveiling the world of oppression." Once they reach enlightenment, *mirabile dictu*, "this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation."

Seldom does Freire ground his description of the clash between oppressors and oppressed in any particular society or historical period, so it's hard for the reader to judge whether what he is saying makes any sense. We don't know if the oppressors he condemns are North American bankers, Latin American land barons, or, for that matter, run-of-the-mill, authoritarian education bureaucrats. His language is so metaphysical and vague that he might just as well be describing a board game with two contesting sides, the oppressors and the oppressed. When thinking big thoughts about the general struggle between these two sides, he relies on Marx's standard formulation that "the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat [and] this dictatorship only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society."

In one footnote, however, Freire does mention a society that has actually realized the "permanent liberation" he seeks: it "appears to be the fundamental aspect of Mao's Cultural Revolution." The millions of Chinese of all classes who suffered and died under the revolution's brutal oppression might have disagreed. Freire also offers professorial advice to revolutionary leaders, who "must perceive the revolution, because of its creative and liberating nature, as an act of love." Freire's exemplar of this revolutionary love in action is none other than that poster child of 1960s armed rebellion, Che Guevara, who recognized that "the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love." Freire neglects to mention that Che was one of the most brutal enforcers of the Cuban Revolution, responsible for the execution of hundreds of political opponents.

After all this, murkiness may be the least of the book's problems, but it is nevertheless worth quoting the book's opening rumination:

> While the problem of humanization has always, from an axiological point of view, been humankind's central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern. Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization,

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> not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality. And as an individual perceives the extent of dehumanization, he or she may ask if humanization is a viable possibility. Within history, in concrete, objective contexts, both humanization and dehumanization are possibilities for a person as an uncompleted being conscious of their incompletion.

Roughly translated: "humanization" is good and "dehumanization" is bad. Oh, for the days when revolutionary tracts got right to the point, as in: "A specter is haunting Europe."

How did this derivative, unscholarly book about oppression, class struggle, the depredations of capitalism, and the need for revolution ever get confused with a treatise on education that might help solve the problems of twenty-first-century American inner-city schools? The answer to that question begins in Pernambuco, a poverty-stricken province in northeastern Brazil. In the 1950s and sixties, Freire was a university professor and radical activist in the province's capital city, Recife, where he organized adult-literacy campaigns for disenfranchised peasants. Giving them crash courses in literacy and civics was the most efficient means of mobilizing them to elect radical candidates, Freire realized. His "pedagogy," then, began as a get-out-the-vote campaign to gain political power.

In 1964, a military coup struck Brazil. Freire spent some time in jail and was then exiled to Chile, where—inspired by his work with the Brazilian peasants—he worked on *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Hence the book's insistence that schooling is never a neutral process and that it always has a dynamic political purpose. And hence, too, one of the few truly pedagogical points in the book: its opposition to taxing students with any actual academic content, which Freire derides as "official knowledge" that serves to rationalize inequality within capitalist society. One of Freire's most widely quoted metaphors dismisses teacher-directed instruction as a misguided "banking concept," in which "the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits." Freire proposes instead that teachers partner with their coequals, the students, in a "dialogic" and "problem-solving" process until the roles of teacher and student merge into "teacher-students" and "student-teachers."

After the 1970 publication of the book's English edition, Freire received an invitation to be a guest lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and over the next decade he found enthusiastic audiences in American universities. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* resonated with progressive educators, already committed to a "child-centered" rather than a "teacher-directed" approach to classroom instruction. Freire's rejection of teaching content knowledge seemed to buttress what was already the ed schools' most popular theory of learning, which argued that students should work collaboratively in constructing their own knowledge and that the teacher should be a "guide on the side," not a "sage on the stage."

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire had listed ten key characteristics of the "banking" method of education that purported to show how it opposed disadvantaged students' interests. For instance, "the teacher talks and the students listen—meekly"; "the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply"; "the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined"; and "the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it." Freire's strictures reinforced another cherished myth of American progressive ed—that traditional teacher-directed lessons left students passive and disengaged, leading to higher drop-out rates for minorities and the poor. That description was more than a caricature; it was a complete fabrication. Over the last two decades, E. D. Hirsch's Core Knowledge schools have proved over and over again not only that content-rich teaching raises the academic achievement of poor children on standardized tests but that those students remain curious, intellectually stimulated, and engaged—though the education schools continue to ignore these documented successes.

Of course, the popularity of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* wasn't due to its educational theory

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alone. During the seventies, veterans of the student-protest and antiwar movements put down their placards and began their "long march through the institutions," earning Ph.D.s and joining humanities departments. Once in the academy, the leftists couldn't resist incorporating their radical politics (whether Marxist, feminist, or racialist) into their teaching. Celebrating Freire as a major thinker gave them a powerful way to do so. His declaration in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that there was "no such thing as a neutral education" became a mantra for leftist professors, who could use it to justify proselytizing for America-hating causes in the college classroom.

Here and there, some leftist professors recognized the dangers to academic discourse in this obliteration of the ideal of neutrality. In *Radical Teacher*, the noted literary critic Gerald Graff—a former president of the ultra–politically correct Modern Language Association—took on his fellow profs, arguing that "however much Freire insists on 'problem-posing' rather than 'banking' education, the goal of teaching for Freire is to move the student toward what Freire calls 'a critical perception of the world,' and there seems little question that for Freire only Marxism or some version of Leftist radicalism counts as a genuine 'critical perception.'" Elsewhere, Graff went even further in rejecting the Freirian model of teaching:

> What right do we have to be the self-appointed political conscience of our students? Given the inequality in power and experience between students and teachers (even teachers from disempowered groups) students are often justifiably afraid to challenge our political views even if we beg them to do so. . . . Making it the main object of teaching to open "students' minds to left, feminist, anti-racist, and queer ideas" and "stimulate" them (nice euphemism that) "to work for egalitarian change" has been the fatal mistake of the liberatory pedagogy movement from Freire in the 1960s to today.

But Graff's cautionary advice fell on deaf ears in the academy. And not only did indoctrination in the name of liberation infest American colleges, where students could at least choose the courses they wanted to take; through a cadre of radical ed-school professors, the Freirian agenda came to K–12 classrooms as well, in the form of an expanding movement for "teaching for social justice."

As a case in point, consider the career of Robert Peterson. Peterson started out in the 1980s as a young elementary school teacher in inner-city Milwaukee. He has described how he plumbed *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, looking for some way to apply the great radical educator's lessons to his own fourth- and fifth-grade bilingual classrooms. Peterson came to realize that he had to break away from the "banking method" of education, in which "the teacher and the curricular texts have the 'right answers' and which the students are expected to regurgitate periodically." Instead, he applied the Freirian approach, which "relies on the experience of the student. . . . It means challenging the students to reflect on the social nature of knowledge and the curriculum." Peterson would have you believe that his fourth- and fifth-graders became critical theorists, interrogating the "nature of knowledge" like junior scholars of the Frankfurt School.

What actually happened was that Peterson used the Freirian rationale to become his students' "self-appointed political conscience." After one unit on U.S. intervention in Latin America, Peterson decided to take the children to a rally protesting U.S. aid to the Contras opposing the Marxist Sandinistas in Nicaragua. The children stayed after school to make placards:

> LET THEM RUN THEIR LAND!
> HELP CENTRAL AMERICA DON'T KILL THEM
> GIVE THE NICARAGUANS THEIR FREEDOM

Peterson was particularly proud of a fourth-grader who described the rally in the class magazine. "On a rainy Tuesday in April some of the students from our class went to protest against the contras," the student wrote. "The people in Central America are poor and bombed

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on their heads. When we went protesting it was raining and it seemed like the contras were bombing us."

These days, Peterson is the editor of *Rethinking Schools*, the nation's leading publication for social-justice educators. He is also the editor of a book called *Rethinking Mathematics: Teaching Social Justice by the Numbers*, which provides math lessons for indoctrinating young children in the evils of racist, imperialist America. Partly thanks to Peterson's efforts, the social-justice movement in math, as in other academic subjects, has fully arrived (see "The Ed Schools' Latest—and Worst—Humbug," Summer 2006). It has a foothold in just about every major ed school in the country and enjoys the support of some of the biggest names in math education, including several recent presidents of the 25,000-member American Education Research Association, the umbrella organization of the education professoriate. Its dozens of pseudo-scholarly books, journals, and conferences extol the supposed benefits to disadvantaged kids of the kind of teaching that Peterson once inflicted on his Milwaukee fourth-graders.

To counter the criticism that the movement's objective is political indoctrination, social-justice educators have developed a scholarly apparatus designed to portray social-justice teaching as just another reasonable education approach backed by "research." Thus a recent issue of Columbia University's *Teachers College Record* (which bills itself as "the voice of research in education") carried a lead article by University of Illinois math education professor Eric Guttstein reporting the results of "a two-year qualitative, practitioner-research study of teaching and learning for social justice." The "practitioner research" consisted entirely of Guttstein's observing his own Freirian math instruction in a Chicago public school for two years and then concluding that it was a great success. Part of the evidence was a statement by one of his students: "I thought math was just a subject they implanted on us just because they felt like it, but now I realize that you could use math to defend your rights and realize the injustices around you." Guttstein concludes that "youth in K–12 classrooms are more than just students—they are, in fact, actors in the struggle for social justice."

There's no evidence that Freirian pedagogy has had much success anywhere in the Third World. Nor have Freire's favorite revolutionary regimes, like China and Cuba, reformed their own "banking" approaches to education, in which the brightest students are controlled, disciplined, and stuffed with content knowledge for the sake of national goals—and the production of more industrial managers, engineers, and scientists. How perverse is it, then, that only in America's inner cities have Freirian educators been empowered to "liberate" poor children from an entirely imagined "oppression" and recruit them for a revolution that will never come?

Freire's ideas are harmful not just to students but to the teachers entrusted with their education. A broad consensus is emerging among education reformers that the best chance of lifting the academic achievement of children in the nation's inner-city schools is to raise dramatically the effectiveness of the teachers assigned to those schools. Improving teacher quality as a means of narrowing racial achievement gaps is a major focus of President Obama's education agenda. But if the quality of teachers is now the name of the game, it defies rationality that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* still occupies an exalted place in training courses for those teachers, who will surely learn nothing about becoming better instructors from its discredited Marxist platitudes.

In the age of Obama, finally, it seems all the more unacceptable to encourage inner-city teachers to take the Freirian political agenda seriously. If there is any political message that those teachers ought to be bringing to their students, it's one best articulated by our greatest African-American writer, Ralph Ellison, who affirmed that he sought in his writing "to see America with an awareness of its rich diversity and its almost magical fluidity and freedom . . . . confronting the inequalities and brutalities of our society forthrightly, yet thrusting forth its images of hope, human fraternity, and individual self-realization."

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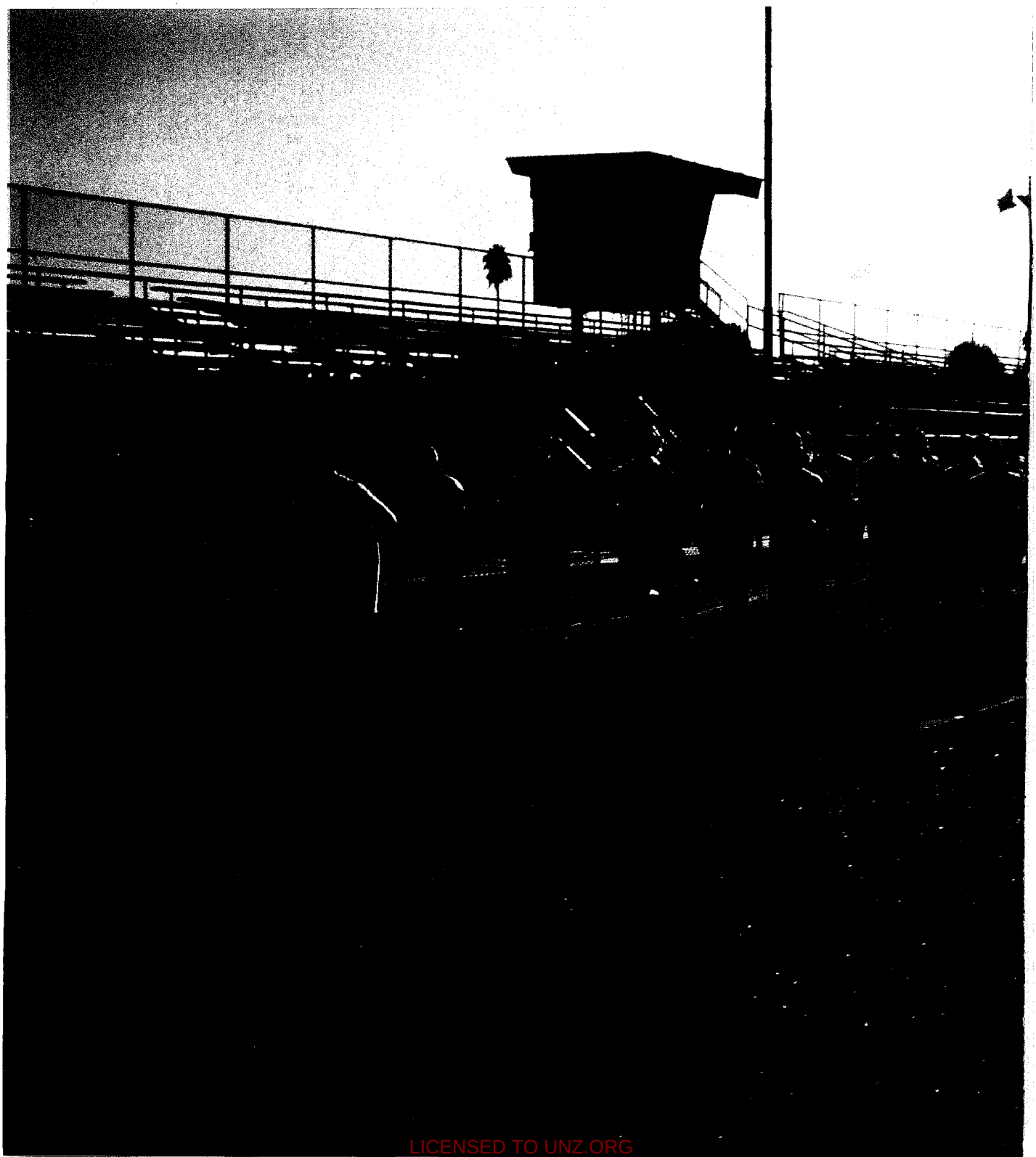
LAPD High



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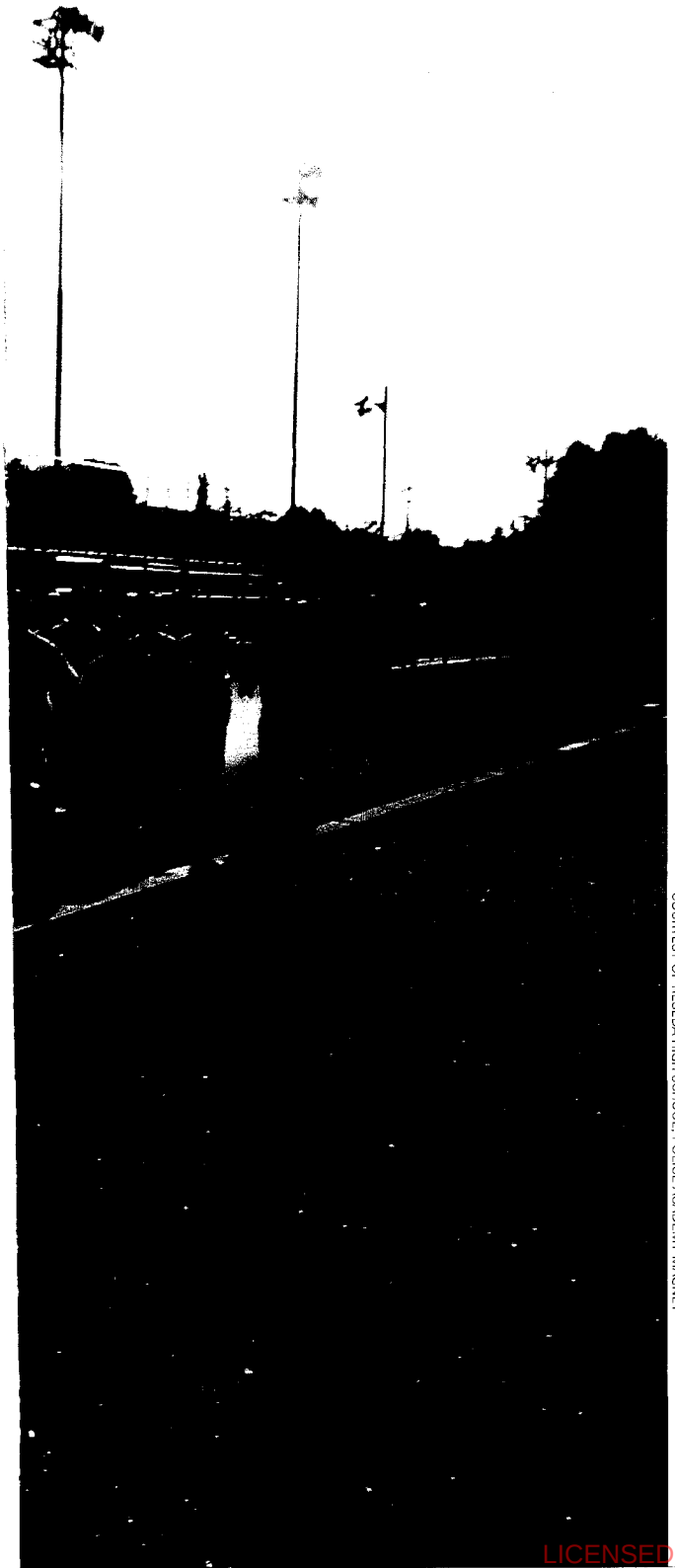

COURTESY OF RESEDA HIGH SCHOOL POLICE ACADEMY MAGNET

Magnet schools sponsored by cops are getting results with at-risk kids.

Laura Vanderkam

The statistics say that 17-year-old Rocio Sazo should have dropped out of school by now. In the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), outside studies show that fewer than half of ninth-graders graduate from high school within four years. Only 16 percent of Hispanics like Sazo, who constitute the majority of students in this vast and sprawling district, graduate having passed the classes needed to apply to one of California's public universities. But Sazo is defying those odds, too. She earns top grades, teachers rave about her leadership skills, she says she might become a math teacher, and she has applied to seven colleges. Now, she proudly relates, she is "waiting for acceptances"—*acceptances*, not decisions.

Sazo credits a big part of her success to her magnet school. Magnet schools are public schools that draw their students from outside traditional neighborhood zoning boundaries, usually requiring them to apply to get in. The schools also have specialized curricula or themes—math or science, say—and often operate within larger schools. Sazo's magnet at Reseda High School has an unusual theme—law enforcement—and a surprising sponsor: the Los Angeles Police Department.

L.A.'s six police magnets—five high schools and a middle school—have only partly fulfilled

The police magnets require four years of phys-ed classes far more demanding than those in the public schools.

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their original mission of recruiting and training more homegrown minority cops. But with four-year graduation rates that nearly double the LAUSD average, these innovative schools have done something far more important: preparing at-risk minority kids for college and sending the majority of them there. As the national school-reform movement contemplates how to spend the $100 billion in new education funding authorized by the Obama stimulus bill, the LAPD schools deserve a close look. Why do they work? And can we replicate the model?

The idea for "LAPD High" can trace its origins to the 1991 Rodney King arrest and subsequent 1992 riots, which left 53 people dead and over $1 billion in property destroyed. Following the violence, the LAPD began a major push to diversify its ranks, seeking to burnish its image among the city's minorities. The proportion of minority officers rose from 37 percent in 1990 to about 46 percent in 1996. But the force was still "having a heck of a time recruiting homegrown cops," remembers Roberta Weintraub, a member of the LAUSD school board at the time. LAPD recruiters were traveling "not only all over the U.S. but all over the world to find officers"; many of the new cops were good, but some struggled to grasp the city's local dynamics.

So Weintraub approached then-mayor Richard Riordan with an idea: magnet high schools, affiliated with the LAPD, where active-duty officers would mentor and help instruct students and where the curricula would reflect criminal-justice themes. The hope was that some of the kids enrolled in these schools would later pursue careers in law enforcement in Los Angeles. With the help of outside grants, the first police magnets opened in 1996; by 2001, programs were running in Dorsey, Monroe, San Pedro, Reseda, and Wilson High Schools and at Mulholland Middle School in Lake Balboa. Today, the program enrolls about 1,300 students, most of them Hispanic.

LAPD chief William Bratton had pondered a similar program to boost local minority recruitment as New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani's first police commissioner back in the mid-nineties, but he left before he could get anything under way. When he took the top cop job in L.A. in 2002, he enthusiastically embraced the magnet program. "It was a dream I had in New York," he says. "I came out here and found the dream was being actualized."

The magnets differ starkly from typical urban schools. True, most faculty members are regular LAUSD teachers, and they offer the usual history, geometry, and composition instruction; students must take the classes required for admission to California's public universities, including four years of English, three years of math, and two years of lab-science classes. Each school, though, has one or two active-duty LAPD officers on site, mentoring students and assisting teachers in some classes. The officers talk to students about what a police career entails, share stories, and even pinch-hit to keep the schools running smoothly (by, say, driving students home after sports practices). LAPD brass, including Bratton, make frequent visits to do student-uniform inspections and give motivational speeches.

The curriculum reflects the law-enforcement theme. Science classes, for example, detour from the usual quizzes and worksheets to emphasize high-tech police work. At Reseda, young *CSI* fans enjoy the use of a forensics lab. Under the tutelage of forensics teacher Barbara Andrade, students attack different types of glass with hammers to see how they shatter, and they study soil, just as detectives do to figure out if the clumps on a dead body are from the location where the body turned up or from somewhere else. The kids analyze fingerprints under a microscope and hair samples, too—when I visited, Alise Cayen, the Reseda magnet's coordinator, had recently let students cut off a chunk of her hair to use in class.

Perhaps the schools' most noticeable curricular feature is a relentless emphasis on physical fitness. Though modern police work requires more brains than brawn, physical stamina helps, and the cadets accordingly take four years of physical training that is a far cry from the halfhearted lap-running that many schools call gym class. At Reseda, the kids' mile times—mostly seven to

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eight minutes, some as short as five and change—reflect the drills that coach Fernando Fernandez, a sub-three-hour marathoner, puts them through. The cadets lift weights, dart through obstacle courses, and crank out vast numbers of push-ups, sit-ups, and chin-ups. They graduate in the kind of shape that puts the rest of California schools—in which 35.4 percent of Hispanic children are overweight—to shame.

Discipline is strict, a communal priority. Reseda organizes cadets into squads of five to eight, each supervised by a student leader. The leaders make sure that their cadets get their work done, keep their grades up, behave in class, and dress neatly. If a cadet falls continually out of line, his squad leader can wind up demoted by a more advanced student leader or—at Reseda—by Sazo, who is the school's captain (top-ranking cadet). She takes her enforcement duties seriously. "I set them aside and tell them, 'You haven't been doing your job, but if you get it together, you have the opportunity to get it back,' " she says. Peer pressure is powerful; the schools have figured out a way to use it for good.

"LAPD brass make frequent visits to do student-uniform inspections and give motivational speeches."

Cadets must also clock dozens of hours of community service per year, and many log more (one student graduated with 1,800). Students often do their service in police stations, naturally. Cadet Edwin Flores volunteers at both his local Watts station and one in Beverly Hills—learning exactly what police officers do and what skills he'll need to become one.

So far, the police magnets' original purpose of getting more homegrown minority cops on the force is, at best, a work in progress. Part of the problem is that African-American students have been less enthusiastic about the program than have Hispanics. In 2006–07, 70 to 95 percent of cadets were Hispanic, depending on the school. But according to LAUSD records, all five high schools enrolled only about 50 African-American students. Even though Los Angeles is only 11 percent black, that's still disappointing.

Timing is also a challenge. Students graduate from high school at 17 or 18 but can't join the LAPD until they're 21, preferably after getting a two- or four-year college degree. A lot can happen in the intervening years, including other jobs. And for urban young people, college completion rates are as abysmal as the LAUSD's graduation statistics; in California, only a third of associate's degree students finish in three years, and about a third of bachelor's degree candidates still haven't finished after six.

Nevertheless, a few early magnet graduates are joining the force. Cesar Corrales grew up in L.A.'s Koreatown neighborhood. "Initially, I never thought of becoming a police officer," he says. But he had thought about becoming a lawyer, and he learned about Reseda's police academy magnet from his older siblings, who were bused to Reseda High School. He graduated from the magnet in 2003 and, after a stint at a junior college, transferred to California State University, Los Angeles. The whole time, he worked as a police aide, logging time with the detective division, working as a Spanish translator, and helping set up the city's sex-offender registry, among other things. "They always worked with my school schedule," he says. His officer colleagues helped convince him that police work wasn't as dangerous as his mother feared and that he could be promoted as early as five years after joining. In other cities, he says, "you have to wait until somebody dies or retires." So after graduating from California State in December with a degree in political science, Corrales completed the initial physical test and the LAPD's background questionnaire. When we spoke, he had a polygraph test scheduled. After that would come an oral interview and then, with luck, an academy start date.

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But the police academy magnets are unequivocally succeeding at a more crucial educational goal: keeping kids in school. Cayen reports that of the 50 to 60 students enrolled on day one of freshman year, only five to eight will leave by sophomore year, with one to three leaving over each of the next two years—a graduation rate of 70 to 90 percent. Most of the leaving students, moreover, transfer to other schools rather than drop out of school entirely. A more impressive statistic still: of Reseda's 2008 graduating class, 100 percent enrolled in a two- or four-year college or joined the military by fall. The magnets aren't an educational utopia—test scores remain mediocre—but as Bratton tells me, "Here's something you can almost fail-safe predict to a parent: if you put your kid into this program, he'll get a high school education, be capable of going on to college, and have the potential of getting a meaningful job in the police department. Why would you not be interested in something like that?"

How are the LAPD magnets doing it? And is "it" replicable? More than half a decade after the federal No Child Left Behind law started designating schools as making adequate yearly progress or failing, the question of what makes a school effective continues to bedevil educators and the public. With billions in new federal education spending coming—some of it designated for rewarding better performance—the question has become even more urgent.

Some of the LAPD schools' success is clearly due to selection. The magnets have minimum admissions requirements. Reseda kids, for instance, must have earned at least a 2.0 grade-point average in middle school and not have major discipline incidents on their records. Further, because students choose to attend the magnets, the program inevitably draws a more motivated group of young people than neighborhood schools that must take all comers. "Kids have to want to be here," says Cayen. Indeed, sometimes they go to astonishing lengths to be there. Brianda Aguilar, a Reseda junior who might like to be an LAPD fitness trainer, boards the bus every weekday at 6:30 AM and spends an hour getting to school; after activities, she often doesn't get home until 8 PM. But she'd rather have the long commute than attend the school near her San Fernando Valley neighborhood, where her mom works as a special-education aide. She attended summer school there before her freshman year and found her classmates' conversations disturbing. "All they were talking about was how much weed they had," she says.

But the magnets' students don't come from privileged backgrounds. Most qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, hard-luck stories are common, and a fleet of buses carts many of them in from rougher parts of town. Take Flores, who lives in Watts, where other teens sometimes warn him that he's "in the wrong neighborhood" when he wears his school uniform (which resembles police blues). Or the young woman who managed to earn straight As and gain admission to UC Berkeley—but said that the best thing that had ever happened to her was her father's death. The man had been an abusive alcoholic who tormented her mother and four sisters. The family survived on her mother's piecework income from sewing jackets in the garment district. When the student graduated with many honors, her mother decided that she couldn't spare the three hours of income to attend graduation.

These sad stories would be a perfect excuse for failure. But the fact that the police academy magnets don't use them as an excuse—and still manage to post impressive graduation statistics—means that their educational approach likely has a lot to do with their success. Consider the demanding physical training, which gives students—many burdened with chaotic, unstructured home lives—a daily lesson in setting goals and working to achieve them. Lowering your mile time by 30 seconds isn't easy. When you run enough laps and lift enough weights to pull it off, you learn that effort pays—and perhaps that other hard things are possible as well. Daniela Gurrola, who graduated from Reseda in 2003, certainly learned that lesson. She won the girls' Toughest Cadet Alive designation as a student (clocking a

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Cadets in uniform at Reseda High School

sub-six-minute mile). Currently a student at Mission Community College, she hopes to transfer to Cal State in the fall. Meanwhile, she's working full-time as a 311 dispatcher for the city, directing community residents to whichever office can solve their problems. It's a tough schedule, going to school in the morning and working from 3 to 11:30 PM most nights. But the lessons she learned at the police academy magnet have helped her deal with it all. "They teach you a lot of determination in yourself," she says. "Basically, you can do anything as long as you stick to it."

It's also worth noting that urban schools where at-risk students learn about the adult world (for instance, what's involved in a law-enforcement career) can often keep graduation and college enrollment rates high. To take one example, the Cristo Ray Network of urban Catholic schools, which asks students to work one or two days per week at jobs in local businesses to earn their tuition, has a near-100-percent graduation rate. Add to this future-oriented approach the motivated teachers whom the Los Angeles police academy magnets attract, and their success starts to make sense.

Encouragingly, the Obama administration's education secretary, Arne Duncan, may be open to at least some of the lessons of these surprising schools. He served as director of the Ariel Education Initiative, whose flagship, Ariel Community Academy in Chicago, is a magnet school serving poor minority children. It embraces educational ideals similar to those of the LAPD schools: a school-uniform policy, high standards, and a focus on thematic education (in Ariel's case, financial, investment, and entrepreneurial instruction).

Of course, not everyone wants a police-influenced education or a career in law enforcement. But there are many worse ways to spend education dollars than on institutions like "LAPD High." As Bratton says, "What's the worst-case scenario? We've produced a productive citizen who is of the city, lives in the city, who will have good thoughts about us."

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Inhuman Rights

The UN's Human Rights Council, friend to Islamists and tyrants everywhere

Ibn Warraq and Michael Weiss

In December 2006, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), an international group established in 1971 and representing 57 countries, hosted an emergency summit in Mecca. The event became infamous after two angry imams from Denmark presented a dossier of cartoons published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* that mocked the Prophet Mohammed. In the ensuing uproar, Muslims murdered several people in Europe and torched the Danish embassy in Beirut.

But the cartoon episode wasn't the summit's starkest example of Muslim outrage over free speech. The most critical decision that the OIC made in Mecca was to adopt a zero-tolerance policy toward perceived insults to Islam. In its "Ten-Year Programme of Action," the OIC announced that it would create an "observatory" to monitor acts of "Islamophobia." It would also "endeavor to have the United Nations adopt an international resolution to counter Islamophobia, and call upon all States to enact laws to counter it, including deterrent punishments"—essentially the goal of its nonbinding UN resolution on "combating defamation of religions," which the UN's General Assembly adopted in March 2008. And it would "participate and coordinate effectively in all regional and international forums, in order to protect and promote the collective interests of the Muslim Ummah, including UN reform [and] expanding the Security Council membership."

The goal was simple: to infiltrate and weaken secular democratic covenants and institutions from within, in a manner reminiscent of revolutionary Marxist groups' "entryism" into the British Labour Party in the seventies and eighties. The OIC's plan for implementing its Islamist agenda hasn't succeeded on all fronts, of course. But it has succeeded spectacularly on one: the United Nations Human Rights Council.

A subsidiary of the General Assembly, the Geneva-based Human Rights Council (HRC) was reconstituted from the ashes of the previous Commission on Human Rights. The 60-year-old commission had long been criticized for ignoring atrocities and allowing membership to notorious human rights violators—most notably, Sudan at the height of the Darfur genocide. In 2006, the General Assembly, backed by then–secretary general Kofi Annan, voted to scrap the commission.

The HRC was formed that March by a UN resolution, though the United States, Israel, the Marshall Islands, and Palau voted against it. The U.S. at present does not occupy a seat on the council because of the Bush administration's skeptical view that the HRC would prove just as ineffectual and biased as the former commission. Bush did license American aid to the HRC, but in September 2007 the U.S. Senate voted to cut that off, too.

In late March, however, the Obama administration announced that the U.S. would seek a seat during the upcoming HRC elections in May. According to Susan Rice, America's ambassador to the UN, "The U.S. is seeking election to the council because we believe that working from within, we can make the council a more effective forum to promote and protect human rights."

This is going to be a daunting, if not hopeless, task. In its three-year existence, the HRC has failed to show any improvement over its predecessor—an unsurprising outcome, given its

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The council in session in Geneva, March 13, 2007

equally lax membership standards. Of the HRC's 47 member states, only 23 live up to Freedom House's definition of "free" countries. Fourteen qualify as "partly free" and ten are "not free," with three of these—China, Cuba, and Saudi Arabia—earning a spot in Freedom House's special report *The Worst of the Worst: The World's Most Repressive Societies*. China, Cuba, and Pakistan haven't even ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the primary legally binding human rights instrument in international law.

The HRC has no legal authority. It passes nonbinding resolutions on what it decides are human rights abuses and can only make recommendations to the General Assembly. Nevertheless, its resolutions enjoy the UN imprimatur, and it can legitimize barbarities simply by ignoring them. If a dictator can claim in the international media that the HRC has passed no resolutions against him, his job of maintaining the status quo and lobbying against intervention in his country's affairs becomes that much easier.

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Delegates to the General Assembly elect states to the HRC by secret ballot. But since regional "groups," like African states and Asian states, automatically get a set number of seats on the HRC, the upshot is that Islamic countries, together with non-Islamic members of the Non-Aligned Movement, always control about two-thirds of the seats. As Roy Brown of the International Humanist and Ethical Union puts it: "Voting, when it does occur, invariably results in a two-to-one defeat for the Western liberal democracies."

No wonder the HRC has ignored some of the most gruesome atrocities in the world. In 2007, it voted to remove its own human rights investigators from Cuba and Belarus and now relies on official state evidence—and, where available, countervailing evidence provided by nonprofits—to adjudicate abuses in those notorious countries. The HRC took the same decision of malign neglect in 2006, when Belarus, under the dictatorship of the Soviet holdover Alexander Lukashenko, jailed political dissidents and rigged its national elections. In December 2007, the HRC responded to the genocide in Darfur by recalling its team of monitors from the region, an unconscionable betrayal that came after Sudan's chief accomplices, Egypt and China, applied pressure in council sessions. A Canadian proposal asking for war-crimes charges against those responsible for the Darfur genocide was rejected in the HRC last year, despite the UN's own fact-finding reports implicating the Khartoum regime in mass murder, torture, and rape. The HRC's sole acknowledgment of the genocide has been to echo the justifications of war criminals throughout history and blame "all parties."

It is notable that five out of the council's ten special sessions have been called to deal with Israeli actions, while not a single resolution has gone on the books condemning crimes perpetrated by China, Zimbabwe, Saudi Arabia, or, for that matter, Hamas and Hezbollah. In fact, one of the HRC's most headline-grabbing moments came in March 2007, when Hillel Neuer of the Geneva-based organization UN Watch presented a trenchant indictment of the council itself for its singular focus on the Jewish state. It marked the first time that the HRC had ever refused to thank a speaker for his statement, as its president at the time, Luis Alfonso de Alba of Mexico, proudly pointed out. (Speakers who *have* been thanked include Cuban representatives claiming that reports of dissident persecution were false; a Nigerian representative saying that "stoning under sharia law for unnatural sexual acts should not be equated with extrajudicial killings"; and an Iranian representative defending her country's Holocaust-denial conference.)

But the HRC's most destructive acts to date, undercutting its entire raison d'être, have come as the result of the OIC's Mecca summit. This March, for example, the HRC adopted a resolution proposed by Pakistan and sponsored by the OIC, entitled "Combating the Defamation of Religions." Passed by a margin of 23 votes in favor, 11 against, and 13 abstentions, the resolution defines any intellectual or moral criticism of religion—read: Islam—as a human rights violation, arguing that since 9/11, the world has seen an "intensification of the overall campaign of defamation of religions and incitement to religious hatred in general." The resolution expresses "deep concern" that "extremist organizations and groups" seek to create and perpetuate "stereotypes about certain religions." It goes on to urge states to "deny impunity" to those guilty of words or deeds that the HRC deems overly critical of religion, and it wants governments to ensure that religious symbols "are fully respected and protected."

The HRC's resolution disturbingly misapplies the term "defamation," the act of harming a reputation by libel or slander. Bodies of beliefs, opinions, and symbols cannot be "defamed," according to any court of law; only living individuals can. The European Union, along with India and Canada, strongly assailed this endorsement of censorship, as did 207 nongovernmental organizations, including three from Muslim countries.

The resolution had been anticipated in another HRC action in 2008, and again the OIC was the driving force. At the body's seventh session, Canada had proposed to renew the mandate of the HRC's Special Rapporteur on

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the Right to Freedom of Expression, an office charged with protecting free speech and cataloging instances of its denial. On March 28, 2008, every OIC member state sitting on the HRC—joined by China, Russia, and Cuba—advanced an amendment to the original mandate. The Special Rapporteur would now, these members suggested, have to report not only violations of free expression but also "instances in which the *abuse* of the right of freedom of expression constitutes an act of racial or religious discrimination" (our italics). Islam would thus be placed beyond scrutiny or censure, while people suffering at the hands of its most reactionary exponents—should they live to complain about it—would find themselves written down in the Special Rapporteur's little black book.

"In December 2007, the HRC responded to the genocide in Darfur by recalling its monitors from the region."

During the discussion that ensued, some Islamic states claimed that if they refused to limit free expression, domestic extremists would run riot, and the Danish cartoon row would become an everyday occurrence. The opponents of the amendment, naturally, were advocates of universality in law and liberty: members of the European Union, Canada, the United Kingdom, India, Brazil, Bolivia, Guatemala, and Switzerland. Nevertheless, the amendment was adopted in a vote of 27 to 17, with three abstentions. The amended resolution then passed, 32 to zero, with 15 abstentions.

Impressively, international reaction was swift and condemnatory. "It is very concerning in a Council which should be . . . the guardian of freedom of expression, to see constraints or taboos, or subjects that become taboo for discussion," said the outgoing UN high commissioner for human rights, Louise Arbour of Canada. Forty organizations signed a petition protesting the amendment. Among the signatories were groups working in Islamic countries, including the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, the Darfur Bar Association, the Egyptian Association for the Support of Democratic Development, and the Pakistan Press Foundation.

As the petition noted, the United Nations already contained a body, the Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to perform the duty now redundantly assigned to the Special Rapporteur. Further, the amendment cast a sacrosanct Enlightenment principle in a negative light. Free expression is often the sine qua non for ensuring racial and religious equality, and yet here it was being interpreted as an impediment to that equality. Finally, the amendment's prolix language confused the import of previous covenants, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which allows the restriction of free expression only to protect individuals, not to protect philosophies, religious traditions, or abstract dogmas. "Religious believers have a right not to be discriminated against on the basis of their beliefs," the petition noted, "but religion itself cannot be set free from criticism." Nowhere is it stipulated in any legitimate human rights document that giving offense or challenging conventional wisdom is off limits in oratory, journalism, literature, or art.

The HRC's promotion of what are, in effect, blasphemy taboos is a logical extension of its internal policy. The HRC is run like an oligarchy governed by Orwellian speech codes, with any criticism of the body's behavior immediately stifled in session. In March 2008 testimony to the HRC, for instance, Roy Brown mentioned that the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam—passed and ratified by the OIC in 1990—took sharia as its legal premise and was inimical to the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Brown was challenging a claim made by Masood Khan,

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Pakistan's UN ambassador, who had told the council, on behalf of the OIC, that the Cairo Declaration was a "complement" rather than an alternative to the Universal Declaration. Immediately, Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, the HRC delegate from Pakistan, issued a point of order, silencing Brown, and announced: "It is insulting to our faith to discuss sharia here in this forum." The president of the council at the time, Doru Costea of Romania, ceded the point to Siddiqui.

Another person harassed was David Littman of the Association for World Education. This past June, during the eighth session of the HRC, Littman was scheduled to discuss the human rights of women in certain countries, including Islamic ones. Among other things, Littman's testimony criticized human rights abuses resulting from the implementation of sharia—in particular, the forced marriage of Muslim girls as young as nine and the stoning of women for adultery, practices that cannot be adequately described without reference to the Koran. In stark violation of the rules, which state that no delegate can receive transcripts of forthcoming testimony, Amr Roshdy Hassan of Egypt had somehow obtained an advance copy of Littman's speech. Hassan and others interrupted Littman a total of 16 times. The testimony, which should have taken only a few minutes to give, was prolonged to about two hours by various points of order and an extended 40-minute recess.

Backing up Hassan was Siddiqui, who claimed that Littman's statement would "amount to spreading hatred against certain members of this Council." Upon returning from the 40-minute recess, Costea ruled that the "Council is not prepared to discuss . . . religious matters in depth," and reiterated with strange grammar and even stranger logic a ruling from an earlier session: "As long as a statement is made with restraint from making a judgment or evaluation of a particular set of legislation which is not in the point of our discussion, the speaker may continue."

Littman did continue—by pointing out that in Iran and Sudan, women are buried up to their waists in pits and pummeled to death with blunt stones for the crime of infidelity, and that 96 percent of Egyptian women are still subjected to female genital mutilation, despite state legislation formally banning the practice (note that the HRC does permit a "judgment" or "evaluation" of *secular* legislation pertaining to human rights abuses). But the instant Littman suggested that only a fatwa issued by Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, an influential Egyptian cleric, could reverse this ghastly trend, Hassan once more interjected, demanding a vote on Littman's testimony. "I will not see Islam crucified in the Council," he declaimed. But asking an Islamic cleric to intervene to stop a human rights abuse is hardly a crucifixion of Islam.

The OIC's members are wise to stifle any allusion to its own "human rights" documents in the HRC. If speakers like Brown were allowed to delve into the nitty-gritty of the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam during a council session, they would easily show how it proscribes far more than it permits. Article 22 of the declaration, which defines free speech, stipulates:

> (a) Everyone shall have the right to express his opinion freely in such manner as would not be contrary to the principles of the Shari'ah.
>
> (b) Everyone shall have the right to advocate what is right, and propagate what is good, and warn against what is wrong and evil according to the norms of Islamic Shari'ah.
>
> (c) Information is a vital necessity to society. It may not be exploited or misused in such a way as may violate sanctities and the dignity of Prophets, undermine moral and ethical values or disintegrate, corrupt or harm society or weaken its faith.
>
> (d) It is not permitted to arouse nationalistic or doctrinal hatred or to do anything that may be an incitement to any form of racial discrimination.

A Muslim scholar who critically examines the Koran as a historical text would find little in the

The Human Rights Council refuses to address the abuse of women in Muslim countries under sharia.

WARRICK PAGE/PANOS PICTURES

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Cairo Declaration protecting his free speech and much curtailing it. An agnostic doubting the prophethood or virtue of Mohammed would be similarly at risk.

As for bona fide apostates, the Cairo Declaration gives them no quarter. "Islam is the religion of unspoiled nature," Article 10 states. "It is prohibited to exercise any form of compulsion on man or to exploit his poverty or ignorance in order to convert him to another religion or to atheism." In Islam, it is assumed that only compulsion or ignorance could lead a believer to abandon his faith or to convert to another religion, both offenses punishable by death. The Cairo Declaration, then, amounts to a preemptive license for Muslim governments to murder missionaries or advocates of agnosticism or atheism.

One needn't be a student of international law or an exegete of the Koran to see the poverty of these precepts when compared with the clear and precise language of the UDHR, which celebrated its 60th anniversary last year. Articles 18 and 19 of the most translated document in the world (according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) read:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.
>
> Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Anyone who tries testifying to the council that the Cairo Declaration, which claims to complement these noble ideals, actually contradicts them—or that it cannot *possibly* complement them, since it is based on sharia, which affirms the inferiority of women and non-Muslims—will now be silenced.

The Obama administration's quest for a seat at the council might prove useful in exposing the HRC to greater media scrutiny. But U.S. participation could inculpate America in every sinister resolution that the HRC advances and lend the council greater legitimacy on the world stage.

How can the ongoing disgrace of the HRC be rectified? One remedy might be to establish stricter prerequisites for HRC membership, such as being a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and a party to the theory and practice of self-determination and freedom of speech, which also means freedom from religious injunctions. Member states might also be required to conduct transparent and independent internal investigations into human rights abuses occurring within their own borders.

During his presidential campaign, Republican senator John McCain advocated forming a League of Democracies that would work independently of the UN (though not replace it) to hold dictatorial or totalitarian regimes to account, impose economic sanctions on rogue states, and provide succor to targets of ethnic cleansing or genocide. With its strict rules for membership, such a multinational assembly would be free of internal obstruction by states like Russia and China, and would thus be in a better position to uphold human rights. The League—which Anthony Lake, who has advised Barack Obama, also favors—might even create its own counterweight to the HRC, a body in which symbolic victories for human rights could take place outside the twilight zone of Islamic interference.

At the close of World War II, Bertrand Russell observed that the human species was historically unwilling to acquiesce to its own survival. An intellectual accomplice in this ongoing suicide pact is surely cultural relativism, an invention of Western liberalism that non-Western reactionaries have taken up as a license to kill and butcher people in peace and quiet. There has been no worse exemplar of this fatal tendency than the UN Human Rights Council.

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The Godfather of American Liberalism

H. G. Wells: novelist, historian, authoritarian, anticapitalist, eugenicist, and advisor to presidents

Fred Siegel

Modern American liberalism, as it emerged in the 1920s, was animated by a revolt against the masses. Liberal thinkers accused the great unwashed of smothering creative individuals in a blanket of materialist, spiritually empty cultural conformity. The liberal project was, so to speak, to refound America by replacing its business civilization—a "dictatorship of the middle class," as Vernon Parrington put it—with a new, more highly evolved leadership. But along with the ideal of the spontaneous, creative individual, liberals also embraced government economic planning, which depended on making people more predictable. The tension between the two aspirations was resolved, rhetorically at least, by proposing to place power in the hands of scientists, academics, artists, and professionals, a new and truly worthy aristocracy that could govern based on what was good for both leaders and the led.

These antidemocratic and elitist assumptions were nowhere better illustrated than in the extraordinary career of a Briton, H. G. Wells. Wells is best remembered today as the author of such late-nineteenth-century socio-scientific fantasies as *The Time Machine*, *The War of the Worlds*, and *The Invisible Man*. But he was much more than that. His political writing achieved extraordinary influence in America, not just through his defense of liberal freedoms such as free speech but through his hostility to population growth, capitalism, and democracy itself.

Herbert George Wells was already a renowned writer of fiction when in 1901 he published the nonfiction work *Anticipations of the Reactions of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought*. The book's scientific prescriptions to cure social diseases turned the novelist into a seer, both in England and in America, where *Anticipations* had already been serialized in the *North American Review*. More than any other intellectual of the time, Wells spoke to two enormous nineteenth-century shifts: the growth of giant industries, which undercut the old assumptions about the sovereignty of the individual; and Darwinism's concussive reassignment of humanity from the spiritual to the natural world, which begged for prophets of a naturalized humanity.

Numerous *fin de siècle* writers had looked backward at a century of material and mechanical progress, both to praise its achievements and to condemn its

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running sore, the seemingly permanent misery of the urban working class. But Wells looked ahead, asserting that the future as well as the past had a pattern. He argued inductively about the nature of what was likely to come, based on the way the telephone, telegraph, and railroad had shrunk the world, and he populated his predictions with a dramatic cast of collective characters. Some he loathed: the idle, parasitic rich; the "vicious helpless pauper masses," the "People of the Abyss"; and the yapping politicians and yellow journalists whom he considered instruments of patriotism and war.

But if these people were leading the world on the path to hell, there were also the redeemers, the "New Republicans," the "capable men" of vision who might own the future. These scientist-poets and engineers could, Wells thought, redirect the Darwinian struggle away from a descent into savagery and toward a new and higher ground. Building on the social and sexual ideals of nineteenth-century utopian reformers, Wells generated a complete cosmology, a scientific socialism to compete with Marxism, which, he thought, reduced the complexities of life to simpleminded slogans of class war. Outflanking the Marxists on their own ground, he called for a different kind of struggle, a "revolt of the competent" against the confines of conventional middle-class morality.

The conventions of Anglo-American family life, Wells believed, blocked the path toward a more highly evolved future. On one side was a "normal, ordinary world which is on the whole satisfied with itself" and encompasses "the great mass of men"—the bovine "Normal Life" of workers, clerks, and small businessmen. Opposite it stood an "ever advancing better world, pushing through this outworn husk in the minds and wills of creative humanity," a "Great State" led by the creative class, a richly textured life that might be possible if only the new men of science could displace the vote-buying of electoral politics.

Well before Mussolini, still a revolutionary socialist in the early twentieth century, and at roughly the same time as Lenin, Wells—in the book that he called the "keystone to the main arch of my work"—gave up not only on democracy but on organized labor as a transformative force. All three men rejected what might be described as social democracy, that is, the attempt to use political means to redress the inadequacies of capitalism. Instead, each proposed a new class, a vanguard to carry forward a postcapitalist social order.

In *A Modern Utopia*, written in 1905, Wells updated John Stuart Mill's culturally individualist liberalism in light of the horizons opened by Darwin and Francis Galton, the founder of eugenics. Biologically, argues the book's narrator, the "species is the accumulation of the experiments of all its successful individuals since the beginning." That means, he says, that the "people of exceptional quality must be ascendant." Further, "the better sort of people, so far as they can be distinguished, must have the fullest freedom of public service."

What provides the possibility for such freedom is eugenics. Wells has no use for the iron laws of Marxism, but he replaces them with the iron laws of Malthus and Darwin. "From the view of human comfort and happiness, the increase of population that occurs at each advance in human security is the greatest evil of life," he writes. "The extravagant swarm of new births" that created the masses was "the essential disaster of the 19th century." Man's propensity to reproduce will always outstrip his productive capacity, even in an age of machinery. Worse, the "base and servile types," who are little more than the "leaping, glittering confusion of shoaling mackerel on a sunlit afternoon," are the most fecund.

In *Anticipations*, Wells had already argued horrifyingly that the "nation that most resolutely picks over, educates, sterilizes, or poisons its People of the Abyss" would be ascendant. For the base and servile types, death would mean merely "the end of the bitterness of failure." It was "their portion to die out and disappear." The New Republicans would have "little pity

THE GRANGER COLLECTION

A generation of American liberals, including Walter Lippmann, Margaret Sanger, and the editors of *The New Republic*, regarded Wells (right) as a visionary.

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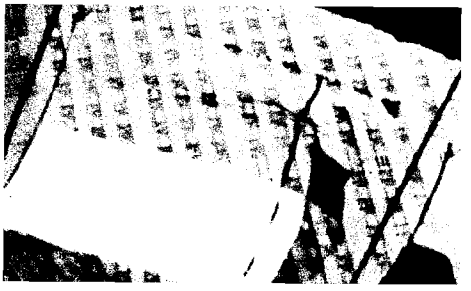

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and less benevolence" for the *untermenschen*, "born of unrestrained lusts . . . and multiplying through sheer incontinence and stupidity."

In *A Modern Utopia*, Wells, stung by criticism of *Anticipations*, backed off, but only partway. "Idiots," "drunkards," "criminals," "lunatics," "congenital invalids," and the "diseased" would "spoil the world for others," Wells again argued. But their depredations required "social surgery," not total extermination. That meant preventing people below a set income and intelligence from reproducing, as well as isolating the "failures" on an island so that better folk could live unfettered by government intrusion. Remove the unfit, and there will be no need for jails or prisons, which are places "of torture by restraint." Illiberalism enables liberalism.

Wells's "Samurai," an updated version of the New Republicans, would keep track of their charges through a centralized thumbprint index of all the earth's inhabitants. Latter-day Puritans in everything except sex, the Samurai would lead lives of irreproachable rectitude, abjuring tobacco, alcohol, trade, and games, which they could neither join nor watch. These elect, "the clean and straight" men and women capable "of self-devotion, of intentional courage, of honest thought, and steady endeavour," would rule in the name of the new godhead: Progress through Science. As Wells would later put it, science was to be "king of the world."

Wells saw America, which wasn't weighted down by ancient traditions, as the best chance for his ideas to come to fruition. A host of British visitors, from Fanny Trollope and Charles Dickens to Robert Louis Stevenson, could barely contain their disdain for their backwoods American cousins. But Wells—an anti–Henry James who saw himself as a self-made man—exulted in the absence of an established church, the embodiment of the irrational past. "Up to the point of its equality of opportunity," he wrote, "surely no sane Englishman can do anything but admire the American state." His 1904 nonfiction book *Mankind in the Making* welcomed a possible reunion of Britain and the United States based, as he saw it, on their common racial stock.

At the same time, Wells showed deep concerns about America. A socialist critic of American capitalism, he was revulsed by the "inhuman energy" of New York's immigrant masses. *In the Days of the Comet* (1906) portrayed overproduction by a rapacious "gang of energetic, narrow-minded" American ironmongers as a threat to English social stability. Wells also thought that American democracy provided too much leeway to the poltroons who ran the political machines and the "fools" who supported them. The "immigrants are being given votes," he argued, but "that does not free them, it only enslaves the country."

In *The Future in America*, an account of his first trip to these shores in 1906 that was serialized in American and British magazines, Wells rightly pointed out that America was essentially "the central part of the European organism without either the dreaming head or the subjugated feet." But that wasn't a good thing, he claimed. In England, modern men of money "had become part of a responsible ruling class"; in America, the absence of an aristocracy had left the country without that sense of "state responsibility" that was necessary "to give significance to the whole." The upshot was that "the typical American has no sense of the state. . . . He has no perception that his business activities, his private employments, are constituents in a larger collective process." Further, Wells argued, America's can-do commercialism was "crushing and maiming a great multitude of souls." "The greatest work which the coming century has to do," he wrote, "is to build up an aristocracy of thought and feeling which shall hold its own against the aristocracy of mercantilism" and its allies "materialism and Philistinism."

In the course of his visit to the U.S., Wells was befriended by Jane Addams, Upton Sinclair, and Lincoln Steffens, who arranged for a visit to the White House. Teddy Roosevelt, an avid reader, was delighted to talk for hours with Wells about the growing class divisions in America, which had been exacerbated by the confluence of rapid industrialization and rapid immigration. Roosevelt had rightly read *The Time Machine* as an anticipation of deepened class divisions hardened over time into an overworld and an

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underworld. The president became "gesticulatory," his voice "straining," Wells remembered. "Suppose after all," Roosevelt said slowly, "that should prove to be right, and that it all ends in your butterflies and morlocks. *That doesn't matter now.* The effort's real"—Roosevelt's reform effort to curb the power of giant monopolies, that is. "It's worth going on with. It's worth it—even then."

"My hero in the confused drama of human life," Wells wrote in *The Future in America,* "is intelligence; intelligence inspired by constructive passion. There is a demi-god imprisoned in mankind." Three years before Herbert Croly's pathbreaking book *The Promise of American Life* totemized Roosevelt as the incarnation of a new liberal politics that deployed Hamiltonian means to achieve Jeffersonian ends, Wells presented TR as the demigod incarnate, the very symbol of "the creative will in man." Here was the man of the future—"traditions," noted Wells, "have no hold on him"—a model of the Samurai. "I know of no other," said Wells, "a tithe so representative of the creative purpose, the goodwill in men as he."

"Remove the unfit, Wells argued, and there will be no need for jails or prisons, places of 'torture by restraint.'"

By 1920, *The Nation* could describe Wells as "the most influential writer in English of our day." Wells's version of socialism, with its barbed attacks on Victorian gentility and its promise of sexual and artistic liberation, was far more appealing to American intellectuals than the bureaucratic droning of the Fabians or the dogmatism of the Marxists.

For many, noted historian Henry May, Wells was "the most important social prophet." The social critic Randolph Bourne described Wells's "religious" impact, his "power of seeming to express for us the ideas and dilemmas which we feel spring out of our modernity"—a power that was nothing less than "magical." Walter Lippmann—the leading political commentator for the first half of the twentieth century, whose writing for *The New Republic* and whose books *Drift and Mastery* and *Public Opinion* shaped the emergence of modern liberalism—saw Wells as one of those "invaluable men who happen along occasionally with the ability to give hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind." And here is literary critic Floyd Dell:

> Suddenly there came into our minds the magnificent and well-nigh incredible conception of Change. . . . gigantic, miraculous change, an overwhelming of the old in ruin and an emergence of the new. Into our eternal and changeless world came H. G. Wells prophesying its ending, and the Kingdom of Heaven come upon earth; the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll, and all the familiar things of earth pass away utterly—so he seemed to cry out to our astounded ears.

Wells's extraordinary influence sprang in part from the elitism of American intellectuals. Critic Van Wyck Brooks, for example, the first American to write a book on Wells, approvingly heard echoes of Nietzsche's supermen in the Samurai: they were "delegates of the species, experimenting, searching for new directions; they instinctively view themselves as explorers for the race, as disinterested agents. . . . Their self-development [is] the method by which the Life Impulse discovers and rewards itself, and pushes on to ever wider and richer manifestations." Once a new class of professionals and engineers came into its own, Brooks explained, conveying the conventional wisdom among advanced liberals, "democracy as we know it" would "pass away." "Without doubt," wrote Brooks, "Wells has altered the air we breathe and made a conscious fact in many minds the excellence that resides in certain kinds of men and modes of living and odiousness that resides in others." Dell, and

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Lippmann too, believed themselves members of the new aristocracy of mind and character.

Other major public figures in the U.S. acknowledged Wells's impact. Margaret Sanger, a leading feminist, militant proponent of the First Amendment, and champion of birth control and eugenics—all causes shared by Wells—believed that the author had "influenced the American intelligentsia more than any other one man." The naturalist Joseph Wood Krutch, looking back on the 1920s, noted of Wells that "a whole surviving generation might appropriately sing in the words of the popular ballad of their days, 'You made me what I am today.' " To assess Wells and George Bernard Shaw, Krutch asserted, "would come pretty close to assessing the aims, the ideals, the thinking and one might almost say, the wisdom and folly of a half-century."

During World War I, Wells—like his admirers at *The New Republic*, the new magazine where he published regularly and whose name was redolent of the heroes of *Anticipations*—had been both an ardent antinationalist and a strong supporter of Woodrow Wilson's vision of a new world to emerge from the terrible bloodshed. But liberal hopes for international comity were dashed, and postwar bewilderment and disillusion created an extraordinary demand for answers. Why had all civilized standards broken down in the course of the first total war? Why had so much sacrifice come to so little? Why had a war to protect the status quo ante been so destabilizing? Why was it being followed not by peace but by revolution?

Anyone who could offer "a clue, any clue, to the riddle," said the historian J. Carlton Hayes, "was assured a large and attentive audience." Lenin was the first off the mark, ascribing the war to the cupidity of capitalism and offering Communist internationalism as the means to peace. For perplexed Americans struggling to make sense of America's new role in the world, Wells provided an alternative internationalist answer. His massive, two-volume *The Outline of History* (1920) became the best-selling nonfiction book of the decade, a sort of secular Bible, complete with creation story—in this case, Darwinian—and a promise of redemption if advances in communications and man's intelligence were allowed to minimize the scourge of nationalism by creating a world government led by the Samurai.

Humanity, Wells said, had a common origin that allowed for a shared path toward its goal, which was "to create and develop a common consciousness and a common stock of knowledge which may serve and illuminate" reality. The recent war was the product of an "educational breakdown" in which the retrograde ideals of nationalism and patriotism had been allowed to metastasize. "There can be no peace now, we realize, but a common peace in all the world," Wells wrote, "no prosperity but a general prosperity. But *there can be no common peace and prosperity without common historical ideas*."

The Outline's aim was to establish that common heritage, to forge the consciousness that merged "the narrow globe of the individual experience" into a "wider being," a Jung-like shared identity as a species searching for the higher evolutionary path. In the future, Wells predicted, anticipating the liberationist ideas of the sixties, "man will breathe sweetness and generosity and use his mind and hands cleanly and exactly. He will feel better, will be better, think better, see, taste, and hear better than men do now. His undersoul will no longer be a mutinous cavern of ill-treated suppressions and of impulses repressed without understanding." Golden youths would lead lives of deliciously complete sexual and emotional fulfillment.

When Wells came to New York in 1921 to cover the Washington Naval Conference for the *New York World* and London's *Daily Mail*, he was received, noted the respected radical Max Eastman, as "reporter-judge." The widely shared sense of Wells as "a priest-like teacher" brought him, said Eastman, "to his highest point at that momentous or meant to be momentous conference." At the disarmament talks, Wells received more deference than the major nationalities'

For Wells, Franklin D. Roosevelt was "the most effective transmitting instrument possible for the coming of the new world order."

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official delegates did. A banquet "was tendered to him at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel by Ralph Pulitzer, the proprietor of the *New York World*," reported Eastman, "and the outstanding dignitaries of the city—legal, political, financial, journalistic, literary—were invited to it."

Over the next decade, Wells would meet with Presidents Harding and Hoover at the White House. But while he was still publicly lionized, his intellectual influence began to decline. Some liberals, disillusioned by the war's outcome and angered by the hysteria of the postwar Red Scare, saw in Wells's optimism the simplicities of a "Fabian schoolmarm," as one critic put it, stuck in the hopeful years before the war. Soviet sympathizers similarly mocked him as "the last of the Great Parlor Socialists."

As the bootsteps of both fascism and Communism began stamping down his influence, Wells wrote a 1924 essay, "The Spirit of Fascism: Is There Any Good in It at All?" The answer: a resounding no. "Moscow and Rome are alike in this, that they embody the rule of a minority conceited enough to believe that they have a clue to the tangled incoherencies of human life, and need only sufficiently terrorize criticism and opposition to achieve a general happiness," Wells wrote. As elitist as his rivals but nonetheless liberal, he explained that "neither recognizes the enormously tentative quality of human institutions, and the tangled and scarcely explored difficulties in the path of social reconstruction." At the same time, both fascists and Communists were too democratic for Wells, having attained power, as he saw it, by an ill-advised appeal to the masses. "The underlying fact in all these matters," he concluded, was that "the common uneducated man is a violent fool in social and public affairs."

Though Wells would always be critical of Marxism, he viewed the Soviet experiment as proof of his foresight. In *What Are We to Do with Our Lives?* (1931), he wrote, "The idea of reorganizing the affairs of the world on quite a big scale, which was 'Utopian,' and so forth, in 1926 and 1927, and still 'bold' in 1928, has now spread about the world until nearly everybody has it. It has broken out all over the place, thanks largely to the mental stimulation of the Russian Five Year Plan." But drawing again on Marx's "utopian" predecessors, he promised an anodyne adaptation of Soviet central planning shorn of police-state thuggery. He called for a "great central organization of economic science," which "would necessarily produce direction; it would indicate what had best be done here, there, and everywhere." But "it would not be an organization of will, imposing its will upon a recalcitrant race; it would be a direction, just as a map is a direction." A map, he explained, "imposes no will on anyone, breaks no one in to its 'policy.' And yet we obey our maps."

The book fell flat. As one critic put it, "Wells is the mostly highly imaginative human being living," but "his intellect can't keep pace with his imagination." By 1932, a frustrated Wells found his superior wisdom bypassed time and again by the superior mass appeal of fascism and Communism. In a talk at Oxford provocatively titled "Liberal Fascism," he called for liberalism to be "born again." After his customary denunciation of parliamentary politics as an anachronism, he let out his frustrations, calling for fascist means to serve liberal ends by way of a liberal elite as "conceited" and as power-hungry as its rivals. "I suggest that you study the reinvigoration of Catholicism by Loyola," Wells said. "I am asking for a Liberal Fascisti." It was also to Communism that "we shall have to turn—we outsiders, that is, the young people with foresight for enlightened Nazis; I am proposing that you consider the formation for a greater Communist Party; a western response to Russia."

Wells thought he had found that Western response in 1934, when he met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt and with key members of FDR's Brains Trust. "My impression of both him and Mrs. Roosevelt," he wrote, "is that they are unlimited people, entirely modern in the openness of their minds and the logic of their actions." Here, for a time at least, was another political hero with whom he could identify wholeheartedly. FDR was "continually revolutionary in the new way without ever provoking a stark revolutionary crisis," wrote the ever-certain Wells. "I do not say that the President has

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these revolutionary ideas in so elaborate and comprehensive a form as they have come to me, [but] unless I misjudge him, they will presently possess him altogether." Indeed, FDR was "the most effective transmitting instrument possible for the coming of the new world order," and in Brains Trusters Raymond Moley, Felix Frankfurter, and Rex Tugwell, Wells found the nucleus of the new elite, those who were destined to take full power in time.

Wells retained his judgment of FDR even after meeting with Stalin four months later in his capacity as president of Poets, Essayists, and Novelists (PEN), an international association dedicated to defending freedom of speech. Wells, noted Malcolm Cowley, the philo-Stalinist literary critic of *The New Republic*, was "not an official figure," but when he met with Stalin, "he spoke with the voice of Anglo-American liberalism." Seeking to outflank Stalin, he told the Soviet dictator, "It seems to me that I am more to the Left than you. I think the old system is closer to the end than you think." Wells asked an unimpressed Stalin to abandon the class struggle on the grounds that the future lay with the Royal Society, the leading British academy, which had called scientific planning the best path to the future. Stalin, echoing Lenin's earlier reaction to Wells—after a friendly 1920 meeting, the revolutionary had found the seer "incurably middle-class"—responded with a lecture on the unavoidably bourgeois character of experts.

"Wells called for fascist means to serve liberal ends by way of a liberal elite as power-hungry as its rivals."

Wells thought the loss of freedom for Russian writers was temporary and seemed to accept Stalin's insistence that vigorous debate within the party took place. Despite Stalin's impermeability, Wells concluded that "I have never met a man more candid, fair and honest, and it is to these qualities and to nothing occult and sinister, that he owes his tremendous undisputed ascendancy in Russia. . . . No one is afraid of him and everyone trusts him." Wells summed up the differences between Washington and Moscow by arguing that "the one is a receptive and coordinating brain center; the other is a concentrated and personal direction." The aim sought, "a progressively more organized big-scale community," was "precisely the same." *The New Republic* and *The Nation* were churning out similar conclusions weekly.

Still, Wells placed his hopes for the future on FDR, not on Stalin. In 1935, he did a series of articles on the New Deal for *Collier's*, extolling FDR's program as a model for the world. But Wells had little new to say. He was still a major figure in America but no longer a major influence, and when eventually he soured on the New Deal as not having attained his exalted expectations, it was to scant effect.

In Germany, of course, the eugenics and central planning that Wells touted soon led in directions that the futurist didn't anticipate. Wells attempted to explain away Hitler as "the screaming little defective in Germany"—an explanation for which George Orwell had only contempt. But Orwell nonetheless recognized Wells's extraordinary impact. "I doubt whether anyone who was writing books between 1900 and 1920, at any rate in the English language, influenced the young so much," Orwell wrote. "The minds of all of us . . . would be perceptibly different if Wells had never existed."

Orwell was right. It was Wells who made it respectable, even before World War I, for liberals in England and America to demean their own native democratic culture in the name of an imagined antidemocratic World State. And it was Wells, with his stature as the prophet of the future, who taught upper-middle-class liberals that they were entitled to govern in the name of social evolution.

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Beauty and Desecration

We must rescue art from the modern intoxication with ugliness.

Roger Scruton

At any time between 1750 and 1930, if you had asked an educated person to describe the goal of poetry, art, or music, "beauty" would have been the answer. And if you had asked what the point of *that* was, you would have learned that beauty is a value, as important in its way as truth and goodness, and indeed hardly distinguishable from them. Philosophers of the Enlightenment saw beauty as a way in which lasting moral and spiritual values acquire sensuous form. And no Romantic painter, musician, or writer would have denied that beauty was the final purpose of his art.

At some time during the aftermath of modernism, beauty ceased to receive those tributes. Art increasingly aimed to disturb, subvert, or transgress moral certainties, and it was not beauty but originality—however achieved and at whatever moral cost—that won the prizes. Indeed, there arose a widespread suspicion of beauty as next in line to kitsch—something too sweet and inoffensive for the serious modern artist to pursue. In a seminal essay—"Avant-Garde and Kitsch," published in *Partisan Review* in 1939—critic Clement Greenberg starkly contrasted the avant-garde of his day with the figurative painting that competed with it, dismissing the latter (not just Norman Rockwell, but greats like Edward Hopper) as derivative and without lasting significance. The avant-garde, for Greenberg, promoted the disturbing and the provocative over the soothing and the decorative, and that was why we should admire it.

The value of abstract art, Greenberg claimed, lay not in beauty but in expression. This emphasis on expression was a legacy of the Romantic movement; but now it was joined by the conviction that the artist is outside bourgeois society, defined in opposition to it, so that artistic self-expression is at the same time a transgression of ordinary moral norms. We find this posture overtly adopted in the art of Austria and Germany between the wars—for example, in the paintings and drawings of Georg Grosz, in Alban Berg's opera *Lulu* (a loving portrait of a woman whose only discernible goal is moral chaos), and in the seedy novels of Heinrich Mann. And the cult of transgression is a leading theme of the postwar literature of France—from

The West's great landscape painters, like the eighteenth-century Italian Francesco Guardi, capture the intimations of the eternal in the transient.

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the writings of Georges Bataille, Jean Genet, and Jean-Paul Sartre to the bleak emptiness of the *nouveau roman*.

Of course, there were great artists who tried to rescue beauty from the perceived disruption of modern society—as T. S. Eliot tried to recompose, in *Four Quartets*, the fragments he had grieved over in *The Waste Land*. And there were others, particularly in America, who refused to see the sordid and the transgressive as the truth of the modern world. For artists like Hopper, Samuel Barber, and Wallace Stevens, ostentatious transgression was mere sentimentality, a cheap way to stimulate an audience, and a betrayal of the sacred task of art, which is to magnify life as it is and to reveal its beauty—as Stevens reveals the beauty of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" and Barber that of *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*. But somehow those great life-affirmers lost their position at the forefront of modern culture. So far as the critics and the wider culture were concerned, the pursuit of beauty was at the margins of the artistic enterprise. Qualities like disruptiveness and immorality, which previously signified aesthetic failure, became marks of success; while the pursuit of beauty became a retreat from the real task of artistic creation. This process has been so normalized as to become a critical orthodoxy, prompting the philosopher Arthur Danto to argue recently that beauty is both deceptive as a goal and in some way antipathetic to the mission of modern art. Art has acquired another status and another social role.

The great proof of this change is in the productions of opera, which give the denizens of postmodern culture an unparalleled opportunity to take revenge on the art of the past and to hide its beauty behind an obscene and sordid mask. We all assume that this will happen with Wagner, who "asked for it" by believing too strongly in the redemptive role of art. But it now regularly happens to the innocent purveyors of beauty, just as soon as a postmodernist producer gets his hands on one of their works.

An example that particularly struck me was a 2004 production of Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at the Komische Oper Berlin (see "The Abduction of Opera," Summer 2007). *Die Entführung* tells the story of Konstanze—shipwrecked, separated from her fiancé Belmonte, and taken to serve in the harem of the Pasha Selim. After various intrigues, Belmonte rescues her, helped by the clemency of the Pasha—who, respecting Konstanze's chastity and the couple's faithful love, declines to take her by force. This implausible plot permits Mozart to express his Enlightenment conviction that charity is a universal virtue, as real in the Muslim empire of the Turks as in the Christian empire of the enlightened Joseph II. Even if Mozart's innocent vision is without much historical basis, his belief in the reality of disinterested love is everywhere expressed and endorsed by the music. *Die Entführung* advances a moral idea, and its melodies share the beauty of that idea and persuasively present it to the listener.

In his production of *Die Entführung*, the Catalan stage director Calixto Bieito set the opera in a Berlin brothel, with Selim as pimp and Konstanze one of the prostitutes. Even during the most tender music, copulating couples littered the stage, and every opportunity for violence, with or without a sexual climax, was taken. At one point, a prostitute is gratuitously tortured, and her nipples bloodily and realistically severed before she is killed. The words and the music speak of love and compassion, but their message is drowned out by the scenes of desecration, murder, and narcissistic sex.

That is an example of something familiar in every aspect of our contemporary culture. It is not merely that artists, directors, musicians, and others connected with the arts are in flight from beauty. Wherever beauty lies in wait for us, there arises a desire to preempt its appeal, to smother it with scenes of destruction. Hence the many works of contemporary art that rely on shocks administered to our failing faith in human nature—such as the crucifix pickled in urine by Andres Serrano. Hence the scenes of cannibalism, dismemberment, and meaningless pain with which contemporary cinema abounds, with directors like Quentin Tarantino having little else in their emotional repertories. Hence the invasion of pop music by rap, whose words and rhythms speak of unremitting violence, and which rejects

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melody, harmony, and every other device that might make a bridge to the old world of song. And hence the music video, which has become an art form in itself and is often devoted to concentrating into the time span of a pop song some startling new account of moral chaos.

Those phenomena record a habit of desecration in which life is not celebrated by art but targeted by it. Artists can now make their reputations by constructing an original frame in which to display the human face and throw dung at it. What do we make of this, and how do we find our way back to the thing so many people long for, which is the vision of beauty? It may sound a little sentimental to speak of a "vision of beauty." But what I mean is not some saccharine, Christmas-card image of human life but rather the elementary ways in which ideals and decencies enter our ordinary world and make themselves known, as love and charity make themselves known in Mozart's music. There is a great hunger for beauty in our world, a hunger that our popular art fails to recognize and our serious art often defies.

"There is a hunger for beauty in our world that our popular art fails to recognize and our serious art often defies."

I used the word "desecration" to describe the attitude conveyed by Bieito's production of *Die Entführung* and by Serrano's lame efforts at meaning something. What exactly does this word imply? It is connected, etymologically and semantically, with sacrilege, and therefore with the ideas of sanctity and the sacred. To desecrate is to spoil what might otherwise be set apart in the sphere of sacred things. We can desecrate a church, a graveyard, a tomb; and also a holy image, a holy book, or a holy ceremony. We can desecrate a corpse, a cherished image, even a living human being—insofar as these things contain (as they do) a portent of some original sanctity. The fear of desecration is a vital element in all religions. Indeed, that is what the word *religio* originally meant: a cult or ceremony designed to protect some sacred place from sacrilege.

In the eighteenth century, when organized religion and ceremonial kingship were losing their authority, when the democratic spirit was questioning inherited institutions, and when the idea was abroad that it was not God but man who made laws for the human world, the idea of the sacred suffered an eclipse. To the thinkers of the Enlightenment, it seemed little more than a superstition to believe that artifacts, buildings, places, and ceremonies could possess a sacred character, when all these things were the products of human design. The idea that the divine reveals itself in our world, and seeks our worship, seemed both implausible in itself and incompatible with science.

At the same time, philosophers like Shaftesbury, Burke, Adam Smith, and Kant recognized that we do not look on the world only with the eyes of science. Another attitude exists—one not of scientific inquiry but of disinterested contemplation—that we direct toward our world in search of its meaning. When we take this attitude, we set our interests aside; we are no longer occupied with the goals and projects that propel us through time; we are no longer engaged in explaining things or enhancing our power. We are letting the world present itself and taking comfort in its presentation. This is the origin of the experience of beauty. There may be no way of accounting for that experience as part of our ordinary search for power and knowledge. It may be impossible to assimilate it to the day-to-day uses of our faculties. But it is an experience that self-evidently exists, and it is of the greatest value to those who receive it.

When does this experience occur, and what does it mean? Here is an example: suppose you are walking home in the rain, your thoughts occupied with your work. The streets and the

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houses pass by unnoticed; the people, too, pass you by; nothing invades your thinking save your interests and anxieties. Then suddenly the sun emerges from the clouds, and a ray of sunlight alights on an old stone wall beside the road and trembles there. You glance up at the sky where the clouds are parting, and a bird bursts into song in a garden behind the wall. Your heart fills with joy, and your selfish thoughts are scattered. The world stands before you, and you are content simply to look at it and let it be.

Maybe such experiences are rarer now than they were in the eighteenth century, when the poets and philosophers lighted upon them as a new avenue to religion. The haste and disorder of modern life, the alienating forms of modern architecture, the noise and spoliation of modern industry—these things have made the pure encounter with beauty a rarer, more fragile, and more unpredictable thing for us. Still, we all know what it is to find ourselves suddenly transported, by the things we see, from the ordinary world of our appetites to the illuminated sphere of contemplation. It happens often during childhood, though it is seldom interpreted then. It happens during adolescence, when it lends itself to our erotic longings. And it happens in a subdued way in adult life, secretly shaping our life projects, holding out to us an image of harmony that we pursue through holidays, through homebuilding, and through our private dreams.

Here is another example: it is a special occasion, when the family unites for a ceremonial dinner. You set the table with a clean embroidered cloth, arranging plates, glasses, bread in a basket, and some carafes of water and wine. You do this lovingly, delighting in the appearance, striving for an effect of cleanliness, simplicity, symmetry, and warmth. The table has become a symbol of homecoming, of the extended arms of the universal mother, inviting her children in. And all this abundance of meaning and good cheer is somehow contained in the appearance of the table. This, too, is an experience of beauty, one that we encounter, in some version or other, every day. We are needy creatures, and our greatest need is for home—the place where we are, where we find protection and love. We achieve this home through representations of our own belonging, not alone but in conjunction with others. All our attempts to make our surroundings look right—through decorating, arranging, creating—are attempts to extend a welcome to ourselves and to those whom we love.

This second example suggests that our human need for beauty is not simply a redundant addition to the list of human appetites. It is not something that we could lack and still be fulfilled as people. It is a need arising from our metaphysical condition as free individuals, seeking our place in an objective world. We can wander through this world, alienated, resentful, full of suspicion and distrust. Or we can find our home here, coming to rest in harmony with others and with ourselves. The experience of beauty guides us along this second path: it tells us that we *are* at home in the world, that the world is already ordered in our perceptions as a place fit for the lives of beings like us.

Look at any picture by one of the great landscape painters—Poussin, Guardi, Turner, Corot, Cézanne—and you will see that idea of beauty celebrated and fixed in images. The art of landscape painting, as it arose in the seventeenth century and endured into our time, is devoted to moralizing nature and showing the place of human freedom in the scheme of things. It is not that landscape painters turn a blind eye to suffering, or to the vastness and threateningness of the universe of which we occupy so small a corner. Far from it. Landscape painters show us death and decay in the very heart of things: the light on their hills is a fading light; the stucco walls of Guardi's houses are patched and crumbling. But their images point to the joy that lies incipient in decay and to the eternal implied in the transient. They are images of home.

Not surprisingly, the idea of beauty has puzzled philosophers. The experience of beauty is so vivid, so immediate, so personal, that it seems hardly to belong to the natural order as science observes it. Yet beauty shines on us from ordinary things. Is it a feature of the world, or a figment of the imagination? Is it telling us something real and true that requires

Modern artists like Otto Dix too often wallow in the base and the loveless.

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just this experience to be recognized? Or is it merely a heightened moment of sensation, of no significance beyond the delight of the person who experiences it? These questions are of great urgency for us, since we live at a time when beauty is in eclipse: a dark shadow of mockery and alienation has crept across the once-shining surface of our world, like the shadow of the Earth across the moon. Where we look for beauty, we too often find darkness and desecration.

The current habit of desecrating beauty suggests that people are as aware as they ever were of the presence of sacred things. Desecration is a kind of defense against the sacred, an attempt to destroy its claims. In the presence of sacred things, our lives are judged, and to escape that judgment, we destroy the thing that seems to accuse us.

Christians have inherited from Saint Augustine and from Plato the vision of this transient world as an icon of another and changeless order. They understand the sacred as a revelation in the here and now of the eternal sense of our being. But the experience of the sacred is not confined to Christians. It is, according to many philosophers and anthropologists, a human universal. For the most part, transitory purposes organize our lives: the day-to-day concerns of economic reasoning, the small-scale pursuit of power and comfort, the need for leisure and pleasure. Little of this is memorable or moving to us. Every now and then, however, we are jolted out of our complacency and feel ourselves to be in the presence of something vastly more significant than our present interests and desires. We sense the reality of something precious and mysterious, which reaches out to us with a claim that is, in some way, not of this world. This happens in the presence of death, especially the death of someone loved. We look with awe on the human body from which the life has fled. This is no longer a person but the "mortal remains" of a person. And this thought fills us with a sense of the uncanny. We are reluctant to touch the dead body; we see it as, in some way, not properly a part of our world, almost a visitor from some other sphere.

This experience, a paradigm of our encounter with the sacred, demands from us a kind of ceremonial recognition. The dead body is the object of rituals and acts of purification, designed not just to send its former occupant happily into the hereafter—for these practices are engaged in even by those who have no belief in the hereafter—but in order to overcome the eeriness, the supernatural quality, of the dead human form. The body is being reclaimed for this world by the rituals that acknowledge that it also stands apart from it. The rituals, to put it another way, consecrate the body, and so purify it of its miasma. By the same token, the body can be desecrated—and this is surely one of the primary acts of desecration, one to which people have been given from time immemorial, as when Achilles dragged Hector's body in triumph around the walls of Troy.

The presence of a transcendental claim startles us out of our day-to-day preoccupations on other occasions, too. In particular, there is the experience of falling in love. This, too, is a human universal, and it is an experience of the strangest kind. The face and body of the beloved are imbued with the intensest life. But in one crucial respect, they are like the body of someone dead: they seem not to belong in the empirical world. The beloved looks on the lover as Beatrice looked on Dante, from a point outside the flow of temporal things. The beloved object demands that we cherish it, that we approach it with almost ritualistic reverence. And there radiates from those eyes and limbs and words a kind of fullness of spirit that makes everything anew.

Poets have expended thousands of words on this experience, which no words seem entirely to capture. It has fueled the sense of the sacred down the ages, reminding people as diverse as Plato and Calvino, Virgil and Baudelaire, that sexual desire is not the simple appetite that we witness in animals but the raw material of a longing that has no easy or worldly satisfaction, demanding of us nothing less than a change of life.

Many of the uglinesses cultivated in our world today refer back to the two experiences

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that I have singled out. The body in the throes of death; the body in the throes of sex—these things easily fascinate us. They fascinate us by desecrating the human form, by showing the human body as a mere object among objects, the human spirit as eclipsed and ineffectual, and the human being as *overcome* by external forces, rather than as a free subject bound by the moral law. And it is on these things that the art of our time seems to concentrate, offering us not only sexual pornography but a pornography of violence that reduces the human being to a lump of suffering flesh made pitiful, helpless, and disgusting.

All of us have a desire to flee from the demands of responsible existence, in which we treat one another as worthy of reverence and respect. All of us are tempted by the idea of flesh and by the desire to remake the human being as pure flesh—an automaton, obedient to mechanical desires. To yield to this temptation, however, we must first remove the chief obstacle to it: the consecrated nature of the human form. We must sully the experiences—such as death and sex—that otherwise call us away from temptations, toward the higher life of sacrifice. This willful desecration is also a denial of love—an attempt to remake the world as though love were no longer a part of it. And that, surely, is the most important characteristic of the postmodern culture: it is a loveless culture, determined to portray the human world as unlovable. The modern stage director who ransacks the works of Mozart is trying to tear the love from the heart of them, so as to confirm his own vision of the world as a place where only pleasure and pain are real.

That suggests a simple remedy, which is to resist temptation. Instead of desecrating the human form, we should learn again to revere it. For there is absolutely nothing to gain from the insults hurled at beauty by those—like Calixto Bieito—who cannot bear to look it in the face. Yes, we can neutralize the high ideals of Mozart by pushing his music into the background so that it becomes the mere accompaniment to an inhuman carnival of sex and death. But what do we learn from this? What do we gain, in terms of emotional, spiritual, intellectual, or moral development? Nothing, save anxiety. We should take a lesson from this kind of desecration: in attempting to show us that our human ideals are worthless, it shows *itself* to be worthless. And when something shows itself to be worthless, it is time to throw it away.

It is therefore plain that the culture of transgression achieves nothing save the loss that it revels in: the loss of beauty as a value and a goal. But why is beauty a value? It is an ancient view that truth, goodness, and beauty cannot, in the end, conflict. Maybe the degeneration of beauty into kitsch comes precisely from the postmodern loss of truthfulness, and with it the loss of moral direction. That is the message of such early modernists as Eliot, Barber, and Stevens, and it is a message that we need to listen to.

To mount a full riposte to the habit of desecration, we need to rediscover the affirmation and the truth to life without which artistic beauty cannot be realized. This is no easy task. If we look at the true apostles of beauty in our time—I think of composers like Henri Dutilleux and Olivier Messiaen, of poets like Derek Walcott and Charles Tomlinson, of prose writers like Italo Calvino and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn—we are immediately struck by the immense hard work, the studious isolation, and the attention to detail that characterizes their craft. In art, beauty has to be *won*, but the work becomes harder as the sheer noise of desecration—amplified now by the Internet—drowns out the quiet voices murmuring in the heart of things.

One response is to look for beauty in its other and more everyday forms—the beauty of settled streets and cheerful faces, of natural objects and genial landscapes. It is possible to throw dirt on these things, too, and it is the mark of a second-rate artist to take such a path to our attention—the *via negativa* of desecration. But it is also possible to return to ordinary things in the spirit of Wallace Stevens and Samuel Barber—to show that we are at home with them and that they magnify and vindicate our life. Such is the overgrown path that the early modernists once cleared for us—the *via positiva* of beauty. There is no reason yet to think that we must abandon it.

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Richard Pryor: Stand-Up Philosopher

Stefan Kanfer

The great American comic satirized white racism, his fellow blacks, and himself.

Playwright Neil Simon called him "the most brilliant comic in America." For humorist Lily Tomlin, he was "a gifted, raging, soaring, plummeting, deeply human man with the tender boy inside—the greatest pioneering comic artist of the last three generations." Critic Pauline Kael dubbed him "a master of lyrical obscenity; the only great poet satirist among our comics." They weren't exaggerating. Other African-American comedians preceded him, and since his death in 2004, a handful of young black performers have earned more money and entertained larger audiences. One, Chris Rock, has every right to boast about his accomplishments. Yet he is modest enough, and wise enough, to warn his colleagues: "You should not even get onstage and attempt to be funny unless you realize you're never going to be as funny as Richard Pryor."

On his way to fame and self-destruction, Pryor became the funniest man in America by creating a new kind of comedy—a hilarious, heartbreaking, and conflicted view of life seen from the underside. He was conscious of his minority status but refused to take the route of special pleading. His vocabulary was down and dirty, but his work had a surprising elegance. He was always himself, yet could populate the stage with a cast of characters ranging from a pack of dogs to a bewildered black alcoholic to a Mafia thug. He was a savage, equal-opportunity satirist; he targeted white racism, his fellow African-Americans, and—finally and most severely—himself.

Pryor grew up in Peoria, Illinois, in the forties and fifties. "Black folks didn't have it so good in Peoria," he recalled. "If they worked at all, they were probably employed at one of the nearby slaughterhouses. My family escaped that fate. They ran a whorehouse."

Richard's grandmother, Marie Carter, was a madam, her daughter Gertrude (his mother) a hooker. His father, Leroy, was a boxer turned pimp who paid little attention to his son except to intimidate him when he stepped out of line. The boy grew up in an atmosphere of moral confusion: prostitution was the family's source of income, yet he attended a predominantly white Catholic school. His mother seemed to love him, yet when Richard was ten she ran off. From that point on, Marie raised him—or tried to.

It was too late; he had become unmanageable. Apart from Leroy's brutality and Gertrude and Marie's professional activities (Richard once saw his mother in bed with Peoria's white mayor), the bright kid suffered from a slew of other miseries. He was small, thin, and shy—the classic grade-school victim. In addition to daily bullying, he was twice sexually molested, once by a john at the bordello, another time by a member of his church.

A high school dropout at 14, Richard spent the next six years doing odd jobs, from truck driver to janitor to untutored drummer in a pickup band. He was drafted in 1960 but attacked another GI of higher rank and wound up discharged after 13 months, many of them spent in the stockade. By this time, an idea had come to him: he could always make people laugh—soldiers, fellow workers, family members. Why not get paid for it?

I wasn't much taller than my daddy's shin when I found I could break people up. A little dog wandered by and poo-pooed in our yard. I got up, ran to my grandmother, and slipped in the dog poop. It made Mama and the rest laugh. I was really onto something then. So I did it a second time.

HENRY DILTZ/CORBIS

A typically protean Pryor routine in 1968

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"Look at that boy! He's crazy!"
That was my first joke.
All in poop.
And I been covered in it ever since.

Pryor landed a gig singing in a Peoria nightclub. Between numbers, he would tell jokes and wow audiences. Encouraged, he pushed on to bigger venues. In New York City, he found work as the opening act for Nina Simone, Richie Havens, and Bob Dylan. He came on like Mr. Cool, a pose that fooled quite a few people, but not Simone. "Opening night," she remembered, "Richard shook like he had malaria, he was so nervous. I couldn't bear to watch him shiver, so I put my arms around him there in the dark and rocked him like a baby until he calmed down. The next night was the same, and the next, and I rocked him each time." Pryor began to calm himself with multiple shots of scotch, then got ready for the next performance with lines of cocaine. It was the opening chapter of a long saga.

Early on, Pryor patterned himself after the reigning black comic, speaking politely, telling middle-class jokes, doing impressions of businessmen and tourists. To audiences, he seemed a Bill Cosby satellite—one reason why he continually found work, but also why star status eluded him. And then one night in Las Vegas, things changed forever. "There was a world of junkies and winos, pool hustlers and prostitutes, women and family screaming inside my head, trying to be heard," Pryor remembered. "The longer I kept them bottled up, the harder they tried to escape." He peered out at the audience at the Aladdin, spotted Dean Martin at a front table—and suddenly experienced what he would call "my nightclub epiphany."

I asked myself, "Who's he looking at, Rich?"
I couldn't say.
I imagined what I looked like and got disgusted. I gasped for clarity as if it was oxygen. The fog rolled in. In a burst of inspiration, I finally spoke to the sold-out crowd: "What am I doing here?"
Then I turned and walked off the stage.
In the dressing room my agent was hysterical, incredulous. How could I have walked off? "Do you know what you did?" he screamed. "Do you know what this means?"
"No, you're the agent. You tell me."
Then I heard those famous words. "You'll never work in this town again. Did you hear me? You will never work in this town again!"
As things turned out, he was inaccurate.

The turnaround took several years. During that time, Pryor divorced, remarried, divorced again, and became increasingly involved with hard drugs. Looking back years later, he observed, "I couldn't escape the darkness." But at least he was able to put his demons at the service of his art—and it *was* art.

To remake the Pryor persona, he went into self-imposed exile in Berkeley, California. For the next three years, he hung out with a group of writers who called themselves the Black Pack, headed by the satiric novelist Ismael Reed. Slowly, Richard began to evolve a new comic style—biting, scatological, improvisational, rooted in the experiences of his childhood, told in the argot of poor and working-class black folks. He prowled the stage like a puma, dispensing the most penetrating comedic view of African-American life ever revealed to the American public.

Pryor's vast cast of characters, headed by a wise old drunk called Mudbone, were at once volatile and vulnerable, gross and sensitive, streetwise and intimidated. As he portrayed them, he showcased an astonishing array of dramatic skills. "I saw myself as a victim of the system," Pryor said, "an outsider for whom justice was out of reach, a dream. And then I saw how closely my situation mirrored the black man's larger struggle for dignity and equality and justice in white society. So I became a kind of prism, refracting the experience of a race."

When he reentered the club scene in the late 1960s, Richard rocked show business. His perspective proved ideally suited to the time, with its Black Is Beautiful agitation, Vietnam anti-warriors, and counterculture leaders attacking the

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mores of previous generations. But poignancy lay beneath Pryor's brightest comic moments, in his work and on his face; the explosively funny addict had become America's black Pagliacci.

You wonder why a nigger don't go completely mad. You get your stuff together. You work all week, right? Then you get dressed, right? And you go out and get clean and be driving with your old lady, going out to a club.

And the police pull you over. "Get out of the car. There was a robbery. The nigger looked just like you. All right, put your hands up, take your pants down, and spread your cheeks."

Now, what nigger feel like having fun after that? "No, let's just go home, baby." You go home, beat your kids. You gonna take that crap out on somebody.

The laughter of recognition began with black audiences, but within a year Pryor was the most popular crossover comedian in the country. Now it wasn't just African-Americans like LeRoi Jones and Muhammad Ali who flocked to his performances; college students and hip whites showed up, too.

Verboten 4-, 6-, and 12-letter words dominated his vocabulary, but as the *Washington Post* observed, Richard "always had a higher purpose than the chest-thumping, crotch-grabbing entertainers who use the N-word with such profligacy. As Pryor saw it, 'nigger' meant 'black like me and millions of others, who'll never get on this stage,' and his use of it might end up doing more than Ali, Stevie Wonder or Bill Cosby to break down racial barriers in mainstream America."

Years later, one Yalie recalled that "the release of a new Richard Pryor album in the seventies became a major event. We ran to the record store to purchase a copy of *That Nigger's Crazy* or *Is It Something I Said?* even before we ever heard all the funny, cold-blooded, true stuff Pryor was talking."

I'm glad I'm black. I'd hate to be white. 'Cause y'all got to go to the moon.

Ain't no niggers going to the moon, you know that. First of all, there ain't no niggers qualified. Or so you all tell us.

If niggers was hip, they'd help y'all get to the moon. "Hey, let's organize and help them whites get to the moon. So they leave us alone!"

In *Ebony*, a young woman covered a typical Pryor performance: "His elastic face melts, his body contorts, his voice gains and loses octaves, before our eyes he morphs into a German shepherd, a deer drinking from a pond, his car as he shoots it to death so his wife can't use it to leave him. Watching him, we are terrified, exhilarated and provoked. Pryor will forever be the gangly, slightly nerdy, funny and smart kid of our collective childhood. The one we ended up falling in love with not only because he was funny, he was sexy; the member of the group we all suspected would do something marvelous, large and life-changing—if he could ever figure out what that was, and beat racism back far enough to get to it."

Pryor's jazzy, improvisational approach was something far beyond Lenny Bruce, who had been funny *because* of his foul language; Richard was hilarious *despite* it. Comedians responded to his extraordinary talent. Robin Williams called Pryor "an alchemist who can turn the darkest pain into the deepest comedy." Eddie Murphy said he was "better than anyone who ever picked up a microphone." Bill Cosby admitted that the "troubled soul" who had run so hard from the Cosby style had "found laughter where none had a right to exist."

Hollywood producers wanted in and offered Pryor a career in films. He won rave reviews for his straight performance as Piano Man in the Billie Holiday biopic *Lady Sings the Blues*. But the audacious albums and concerts kept coming. They featured a laundry list of volatile phrases and attitudes, and they made producers uneasy. Was he exhorting African-Americans or mocking them? Was he castigating whites or praising them? Or was he attacking both groups?

They had a movie of the future called Logan's Run. *There ain't no niggers in it.*

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Pryor in *Silver Streak* (1976), one of four pepper-and-salt movies he made with comedian Gene Wilder

I said, "Well, white folks ain't planning for us to be here. That's why we got to make movies. But we got to make some really hip movies. Not movies about pimps. We done made enough movies about pimps, because white folks already know about pimping. 'Cause we the biggest whores they got."

We find Super Nigger, with his X-ray vision that enables him to see through everything except white, disguised as Clark Washington, mild-mannered custodian for the Daily Planet. *He's shuffling into Perry White's office.*

"Hey, man, I'm quitting, baby."

"Great Caesar's Ghost! I can't talk to you now."

"Talk to me, Jack. 'Cause I'm ready to quit, man. You dig? I'm tired of doing them halls. Every time I finish, Lois Lane and them come slipping and sliding down through there and I got to do them over again. I'm through."

Pryor cowrote *Blazing Saddles* with Mel Brooks, but Cleavon Little won the role of black sheriff: Warner executives feared that Pryor's "street cred" might turn off suburban audiences. Still, independents were willing to roll the dice. In 1978 came *Blue Collar*, set in a Detroit automobile factory, a searing tragicomedy that examined the lives of three assembly-line workers, two black and one white: Pryor, Yaphet Kotto, and Harvey Keitel. Impoverished and ill-used, the trio decides to raid the union treasury. Instead of loot, they find paperwork showing that the labor organization is in bed with the mob, lending money at usurious rates. When they try to use the information, however, they wind up brutally quashed. Critics found *Blue Collar* rough-edged, and it failed at the box office. But most reviewers agreed with Vincent Canby's appraisal in the *New York Times*: "The center of the film is Mr. Pryor, who has a role that for the first time makes use of the wit and fury that distinguish his straight comedy routines."

Pryor had joined Bill Cosby and Sidney Poitier in another trio for *Uptown Saturday Night* and was the marquee attraction in such comedies as *Car Wash* and *Silver Streak*, the first of four pepper-and-salt features costarring Gene Wilder. Lily Tomlin hired Pryor to write material for her TV specials; then *Saturday Night Live* grabbed him. In one skit, he and Chevy Chase played job candidate and employer. Their word-association game, a cascade of escalating network-verboten terms, pushed NBC to the edge.

Chevy: "Negro."
Richard: "Whitey."
"Tar baby."
"What did you say?"
"Tar baby."
"Ofay."
"Colored."
"Redneck."
"Jungle bunny."
"Peckerwood."
"Burr-head."
"Cracker."
"Spear-chucker."
"White trash."
"Jungle bunny."
"Honkey."
"Spade."
"Honkey-honkey."
"Nigger!"
"Deeeeeead honkey!"

All the while, Pryor was becoming ever more celebrated. A documentary, *Richard Pryor Live in Concert*, set the standard for all comedy "concert" films to follow. It caught the entertainer in peak form, reflecting on his disorderly life, his domestic quarrels with wives and girlfriends, the death of a pet monkey, the story of his brush with death during a heart attack: "I woke up in the ambulance, right? And there was nothing but white people staring at me. I said, 'I done died and wound up in the wrong

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heaven. Now I got to listen to Lawrence Welk the rest of my days.' "

As his fame rose, so did his trouble with wives and ex-wives—five, all told, with a total of seven children. (Only one, Rain Pryor, chose a show-business career, appearing in sitcoms and off-Broadway plays. Her memoir, *Jokes My Father Never Told Me*, was published by HarperCollins in 2006.) Accompanying Richard's familial complications were deteriorating health and difficulties with the IRS.

I went to jail for ten days for income tax evasion. I didn't know a thing about no taxes. I told the judge, "Your Honor, I forgot."

He said, "You'll remember next year, nigger."

Unhappy and guilt-ridden, he exiled himself once more, this time to Africa. He had heard tales about the place and wanted to see it for himself. Something epochal occurred while he was there—though initially, he hid his insight beneath gags: "Landing at the airport in Nairobi, it just fills your heart up. You see everybody's black. And you realize that people are the same all over the world. Because people in Africa screw over your luggage just like people in New York."

Even though Pryor would use the continent for routines, the visit deeply affected him. Long before black leaders like Cosby and Juan Williams warned about the corrosive social effects of gangsta rap, he went public about the black community's degraded language and its consequences.

One thing that happened to me that was magic was that I was leaving, sitting around the hotel lobby, and a voice said, "What do you see? Look around."

And I looked around, and I looked around, and I saw black people everywhere. At the hotel, on television, in stores, on the street, in the newspapers, at restaurants, running the government, on advertisements. Everywhere.

And the voice said, "You see any niggers?"

I said, "No."

It said, "You know why? 'Cause there aren't any."

I'd been there three weeks and hadn't said it. And it started making me cry, man. All that crap. All the acts I've been doing. As an artist and comedian. Speaking and trying to say something. And I'd been saying that. That's a devastating word. That had nothing to do with us. We are from a place where they first started people. I left regretting ever having uttered the word on a stage or off it. It was a wretched word. I felt its lameness. It was misunderstood by people. They didn't get what I was talking about. And so I vowed never to say "nigger" again.

The N-word vanished from his routines. But the comedian failed to make a corresponding cleanup in his private life. From standard substance abuse he moved on to freebasing cocaine. While filming in Phoenix, he dropped in at the Arizona State Penitentiary to play Cool Black Celebrity for the inmates. Richard even planned to sneak in some drugs. Both the prisoners and the wardens quickly disabused him, and because he could never be anything but honest, he turned the experience into material.

I always said the black man had been screwed over since the Revolution. "We're nice people. We just got a bad break." But I was there six weeks and I talked to some of the brothers there. Thank God we got jails.

I said to one, "Why'd you kill everybody in the house?"

He said, "They was home."

The drug use intensified. Friends tried to get him to stop, or at least slow down. Jim Brown, the running back turned actor, asked him what the hell he was doing to himself. "Freebasing," replied Pryor. Snapped Brown, "What's free about it?" The words bounced off ineffectively until the night Pryor spilled cognac all over himself while lighting a toke. A moment later, he was engulfed in flames, screaming down a thoroughfare. Later, a *Washington Post* columnist commented that Pryor was "his own Nero. He fiddled while he burned."

You know something I noticed? When you run down the street on fire, people will move out of your way. They don't screw around. Except for one old drunk who's sitting there, going, "Hey, buddy, can I get a light? Come on, pal. A little off the sleeve?"

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Bad press made Richard reconsider his life. He quit taking drugs and got his act together. In the post-crackup documentary *Live on the Sunset Strip* (1982), he speaks with extraordinary candor about his freebasing catastrophe. The revelation begins, of course, with a gag: "Before going to bed, it's my habit to have a glass of no-fat milk and cookies. When I put them together, they exploded. Scientists are still trying to figure out what happened." He proceeds to the delusions that arise from cocaine-smoking ("I understand, I understand," his pipe tells him), the falling away of his friends, the denial of drug use to his family, the horrific accident with first-, second-, and third-degree burns, and months of agonizing physical and mental therapy. All these could have served as pretexts for self-pity; instead, Pryor turns them into something as laugh-provoking as they are affecting.

Richard's 38th film, *Jo-Jo Dancer, Your Life Is Calling*, had more to say about life lessons. The contrite, transparently autobiographical account of a black superstar's rise and crash—written, produced, and directed by the star himself—wasn't a hit, but it seemed to exorcise many demons. Alas, Pryor had hit the brakes too late. During the filming of the ironically named *Critical Condition*, he found his legs unresponsive to his will. Physicians at the Mayo Clinic gave him the awful news: he was in the first stages of multiple sclerosis.

There were still movies to make, and he did some standup at the Comedy Store in Los Angeles, and later, when the paralysis made it impossible to walk, he entertained in a wheelchair. Pryor won an Emmy for his performance as a bedridden victim of paralysis in *Chicago Hope*. And in 1998, he received the first Mark Twain Humor Prize, awarded at the Kennedy Center. He responded, "It is nice to be regarded on a par with a great white man. Now, that's funny!" Then he got serious. "Two things people throughout history have had in common are hatred and humor. I am proud that, like Mark Twain, I have been able to use humor to lessen people's hatred."

Pryor dropped out of sight during his last years, but when he died in 2004 large obituaries ran in every major newspaper. Network and cable news shows broadcast expurgated versions of his routines and excerpts from his films. And celebrities lined up to acknowledge their debt to an authentic original. "To fully appreciate the power of Richard Pryor as a stand-up comedian," said David Letterman, "you had to follow him at the Comedy Store. I did once, and I'm lucky to be alive." Composer Quincy Jones added, "I've always thought that a big laugh is a really loud noise from the soul saying, 'Ain't that the truth!' Richard Pryor was the truth machine. He took black street humor to its highest universal level." Jim Carrey was the most eloquent: "Some people are born wearing an iron shoe. They're the ones who kick doors down and enter the places that before them have been untouched even by light. Theirs is always a mission filled with loneliness and broken bones. Pryor was one of the bravest of them."

Today, new generations are discovering Pryor's routines on YouTube, as well as on widely available DVDs and CDs, making him famous all over again. With good reason. For unlike the shock-troop comedy that panders to a snickering audience, Richard Pryor's work had authenticity, purpose, an odd dignity. His memorable representatives of both the black and white worlds, his acute social observations, his autobiographical self-parodies were timeless—and so were his strivings for racial pride. As Mudbone once observed about himself in a third-person monologue: "He'd learned somethin' through all the crap he'd been through. Acquired wisdom. Done become a philosopher."

You all know how black humor started? It started on slave ships. Cat was rowing and dude says, "What you laughin' about?"

He said, "Yesterday I was a king." ▨

Clockwise from upper left: a studio shot from 1964; performing live on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1968; the 1982 film *Live on the Sunset Strip*; and suffering from MS but still making jokes in 1995

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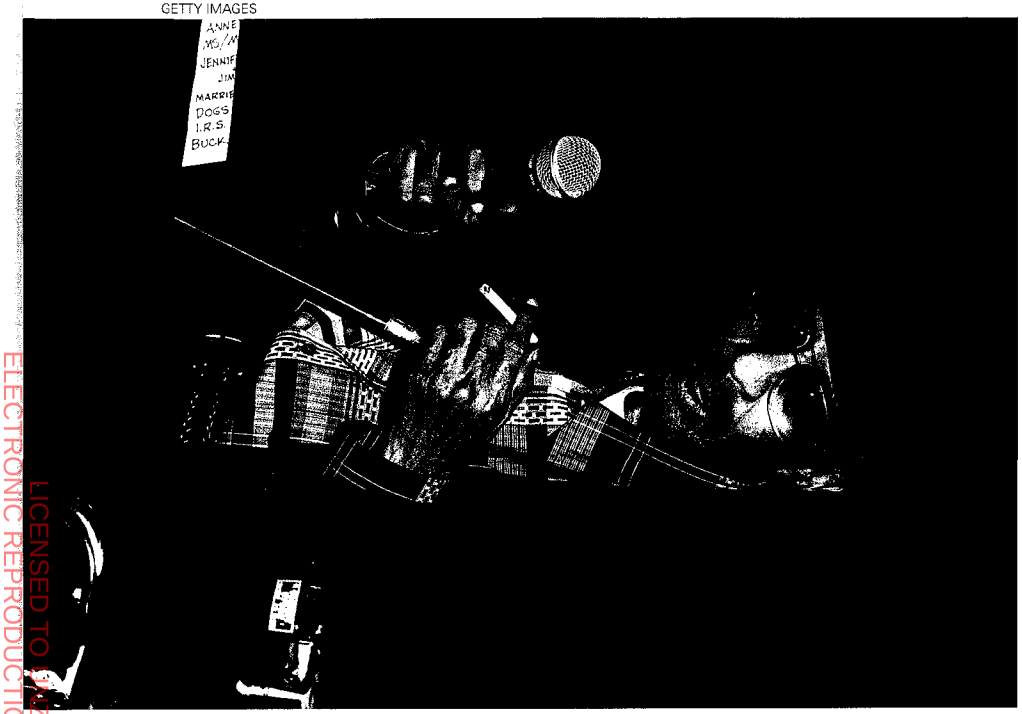
GETTY IMAGES



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Oh, to

England

A Modern Witch Trial

Theodore Dalrymple

Racism: the charge against which there is no defense

Men may be created equal, but not all murders are equal. Some are quickly forgotten, except by those immediately affected by them, while others—by no means always political assassinations—have a lasting political impact. Among the politically significant kind was the murder of Stephen Lawrence, a young black man, in a London suburb on the evening of April 22, 1993. Five or six white youths set upon Lawrence and a friend, Duwayne Brooks. One of the attackers supposedly shouted, "What, what, nigger?" immediately before Lawrence was stabbed to death. Brooks managed to evade the attackers, who ran away.

Despite considerable circumstantial evidence against several suspects, the perpetrators escaped conviction. The police investigation into the murder was a model of incompetence of the kind that every Briton now expects of our boys in blue. Over the investigation there also hung a pall of suspected corruption, for one suspect was the son of a rich drug trafficker who, on a previous occasion when his son stood accused of a stabbing, had tried (unsuccessfully) to bribe and threaten the victim into altering his evidence.

But the Lawrence murder took on a wide social significance because of its racial overtones. The botched investigation became a cause célèbre—the presumption being that racism alone could explain the police's failure to bring the perpetrators to justice—and the government launched an official inquiry to "identify the lessons to be learned for the investigation and prosecution of racially motivated crimes." There followed a festival of political and emotional correctness the likes of which have rarely been equaled. It would be impossible, at less than book length, to plumb the depths of intellectual confusion and moral cowardice to which the inquiry plunged. In 1999, it released a report of its findings that won almost universal praise despite its risible shortcomings.

This year, on the tenth anniversary of the report, the press and professional criminologists are celebrating it for, as one put it, bringing about a "paradigm shift" in the sensitivities of British police about "diversity"—police now think about race all the time, it seems. The report's real effect, however, was to demoralize further an already demoralized police force, which, immediately after the report appeared, retreated from stopping or searching people behaving suspiciously and watched street robberies increase 50 percent.

Perhaps the fact that the inquiry was open to the public had something to do with the nature of the resulting report. The public gallery regularly overflowed with activists and extremists, who did not hesitate to jeer and mock the witnesses with whom they disagreed; the head of the inquiry, Sir William Macpherson, rarely admonished these spectators, thus creating an officially sanctioned atmosphere of intimidation. Among the self-congratulatory sentences that opened the report ("We believe that our procedures did ensure fairness"; "The contributions of the Inquiry's Advisers to the Report and to the conclusions to the Report . . . have been imaginative, radical and of incalculable worth") was the following, a flash of lightning in the darkness: "We thank the officers from the Walworth Police Station, who in difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances have helped to keep order when emotions ran high." An incipient riot is not a situation in which the

Guilty until proven guilty

HOWARD PYLE, TRIAL OF TWO WITCHES/THE ART ARCHIVE/CULVER PICTURES

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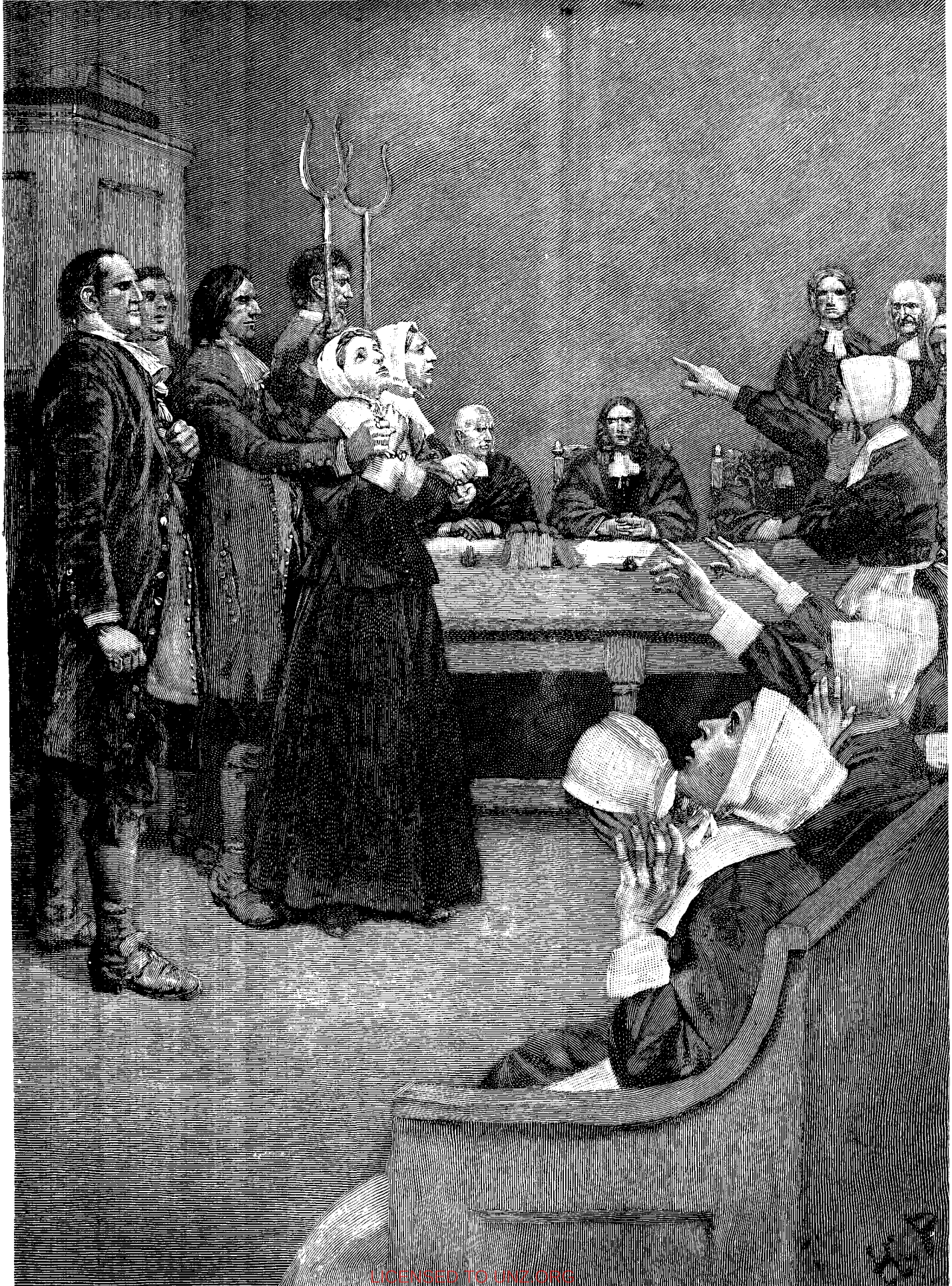

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truth is likely to emerge or to be uppermost in people's minds.

The report's contention was that the mishandled Lawrence case illustrated the "institutional racism" of the London police force. Poor Sir William tied himself in knots trying to explain the notion of institutional racism, relying in part on that great moral authority on race relations, Stokely Carmichael, the onetime "prime minister" of the Black Panthers. As Macpherson admitted, he could point to no actual instance of racist behavior by the officers involved in the case, though evidence of incompetence and delay was abundant. But if he had concluded from the lack of evidence of racist behavior that the police were not racist, he doubtless would have become an object of execration by all the people who think the right thoughts. Thus Macpherson's redefinition of racism: "Failure to adjust policies and methods to meet the needs of policing a multi-racial society can occur simply because police officers may mistakenly believe that it is legitimate to be 'colour-blind' in both individual and team response to the management and investigation of racist crimes."

On the very next page, however, Sir William quoted approvingly the assertion of an association of black police officers: "Institutional racism leads officers to act, albeit unconsciously, and for the most part unintentionally, and treat others differently because of their ethnicity or culture." In other words, if you treat people the same, you are racist; but if you treat them differently, you are racist. It is clear that we are here in the realm not of the rule of law but of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, and that Macpherson is acting not as judge but as witchfinder-general.

The evidence of institutional racism that Macpherson uncovered would be laughable, had the liberal press not taken it so seriously. For example, when the police arrived at the murder scene, Brooks snarled: "Who called you fucking cunts anyway, pigs, I only called an ambulance." That the police did not feel entirely reassured that Brooks was a respectable, upright citizen, and ignored the fact that he was also a victim of the attack, became for Macpherson a sign of their racist stereotyping, not a natural response to such vile abuse, which is not a normal way for the law-abiding to address the supposed guardians of the law—or, indeed, anyone else.

Further evidence, in Sir William's view, was that some of the detectives refused to accept that the Lawrence murder was "wholly racist," though none denied at least a racist element. Of course, since no one had actually been convicted of the murder, the murderer's motive could not be known for certain. And even if the suspects—a violent group, certainly—were indeed the culprits, was racism the sole, or even primary, cause of their violence? One suspect—David Norris, the drug trafficker's son—was almost certainly guilty of that earlier stabbing in which his father became illegally involved, as the report observed. But there the victim was white. Norris and two other suspects in the Lawrence murder had also been suspects in another assault, this one on two brothers, both white. In both instances, Norris got off because of incompetent prosecutions.

Macpherson did not draw the obvious inference, and if he did, the liberal intelligentsia would not have applauded. Let us assume that Norris was indeed one of Stephen Lawrence's murderers. If the prosecution of Norris's earlier crimes had not been so incompetent, and if he had received an adequate sentence if found guilty (an unlikely outcome in contemporary Britain), then Lawrence would now be alive.

At one point, the inquiry listened to secretly recorded conversations among the Lawrence suspects. The conversations were racist in the crudest possible way, but they were not purely racist. Norris said, for example, "If I was going to kill myself, do you know what I'd do? I'd go and kill every black cunt, every Paki, every copper, every mug that I know." The police in London are not predominantly minorities; it is also unlikely that "every mug" that Norris knew was a minority. Norris's propensity to racism was probably caused by his propensity to violence,

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rather than the other way around.

So on every possible ground, the police who dismissed the idea that the murder was "wholly racist" were right, at least factually. Their error was political or even metaphysical—beyond the realm of mere empirical evidence. On Macpherson's view, the police should act more as defenders of politically correct orthodoxy than as keepers of the peace and searchers after the truth.

Further confirmation of Sir William's moral cowardice was his uncritical acceptance of everything that Stephen Lawrence's mother said. Now, Mrs. Lawrence had lost her son to murder, and the police had failed to solve the far from insoluble crime; she was understandably distraught and angry. But that did not make her the arbiter of truth; common sense, indeed, should have suggested the contrary. One might have hoped that a judge would have shown some judgment.

At the beginning of the report, Macpherson defended the unusually "adversarial" manner in which the inquiry was conducted. "Cross-examination of many officers was undoubtedly robust and searching," he wrote. A few pages later, without noticing any contradiction, he mentioned that when one Mr. Gompertz, the counsel for the police, was questioning Mrs. Lawrence, "The nature and content of the questions made Mrs. Lawrence protest that her perception was that she was being put on trial. Wisely Mr. Gompertz desisted." In short, only the accused could be questioned.

Mrs. Lawrence had already demonstrated that, no doubt in her distress, she was willing to go beyond the facts. In her statement to the coroner's court, she said (and later repeated the assertion to Nelson Mandela when he visited London): "In my opinion what had happened was the way of the judicial system making a clear statement to the black community that their lives are worth nothing and the justice system will support any one, any white person who wishes to commit any crime or even murder against a black person, you will be protected, you will be supported by the British system."

Even if we leave aside the question of why she bothered to participate in the system at all if it really was as she described it, she ought to have known that she was exaggerating. I quote from the report, which sought to show that Lawrence's was not the only racist murder in the area:

> In February 1991 a white man named Thornburrow murdered a young 15 year old black youth named Rolan Adams. . . . He was sentenced to life imprisonment.
>
> On 11 July 1992 an Asian boy called Rohit Duggal was stabbed to death by a white youth named Peter Thompson. . . . Thompson was found guilty of the murder in February 1993.

Mrs. Lawrence should have known about these sentences. If she did not, she was ignorant; if she did, she was lying. But all that Macpherson said of her incendiary charge was that it showed the depth of her feeling—not that it was inaccurate and misleading. Her victimhood had to be immaculate.

Mrs. Lawrence further said that she felt condescended to by the police and ascribed this condescension to their racism. Macpherson showed—surprisingly, for a judge—no recognition of the obvious difficulties in accepting such feeling as evidence of anything. He did not even demand that her feelings have some objective correlative: if she *felt* condescended to because of racism, she *was* condescended to because of racism.

Among the report's many pernicious recommendations was the following: "The definition of a racist incident should be any incident which is perceived as racist by the victim or any other person." Nothing could be better designed to destroy the possibility of easy—dare I say normal—relations among people of different races. For the notion that racism is so pervasive and institutionalized that it is everywhere, even where it appears not to be, induces in the susceptible a paranoid state of mind, which then finds

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racism in every possible situation, in every remark, in every suggestion, in every gesture and expression. It is a charge against which there is no defense.

Two incidents in my clinical experience illustrate this nonfalsifiability. In the first, the lawyers for a black defendant asked me to appraise his fitness to plead. The defendant faced charges of assaulting another black man, out of the blue, with an iron bar. The man was obviously paranoid, his speech rambling and incoherent; his lawyers could obtain no sensible instructions from him. I argued that he was unfit to plead. Whereupon the man's sister denounced me as a racist: I had reached my conclusions, she charged, only because her brother was black. Her 15-year-old daughter started to describe to me her frequent difficulties in understanding her uncle, only to be told to shut up by her mother. The lawyers had been unable to obtain instructions from the defendant only because they were white, the sister persisted. Give her brother black lawyers, and he would be perfectly reasonable. Of course, if I had said that he *was* fit to plead, she could have claimed with equal justice (which is none) that I came to that conclusion only because he was black.

The second case, far more serious, ended in a man's death; the blame was partly mine. A black man in his mid-twenties arrived at our hospital with severely cut wrists. He was nearly exsanguinated and needed a large blood transfusion; his tendons also needed an operation to repair. By all accounts, he had been a perfectly normal man, happily employed, a few weeks before, but suddenly he had stopped eating and become a recluse, barricading himself in his house until police and family broke in to reach him. His suicide attempt was not one of those frivolous gestures with which our hospitals are all too familiar. If ever a man meant to kill himself, this man did.

His mother was by his bedside. I told her that her son should remain in the hospital for treatment (you'd hardly have to be a doctor to realize this). At first she was perfectly agreeable; but then a friend of the young man, himself young and black, arrived and instantly accused me of racism for my supposed desire to lock the patient up. I tried to reason with this friend, but he became agitated and aggressive, even menacing. Whether from conviction or because she, too, felt intimidated, the mother then sided with the friend and started to say that I was racist in wishing to detain her son.

I could have insisted on the powers granted to me by law—asking a court to have social services replace the mother as the patient's nearest relative for the legal purpose of keeping him in treatment. But I did not fancy the process: the young friend had threatened to bring reinforcements, and a riot might have ensued in the hospital. Instead, I agreed to the demand that I let the patient go home. The two said that they would look after him, and I made them sign a paper (of no legal worth) acknowledging that I had warned them of the possible consequences.

This piece of paper they screwed up into a ball and threw away immediately outside the ward, where I found it later. I had made copies, and it was one of these that I sent to the coroner when, six weeks later, the young man gassed himself to death with car exhaust. The notion of ubiquitous, institutionalized racism resulted in his death; and I resolved that it would never intimidate me again.

When I think of Macpherson's feeble mental pirouettes, I turn for relief to an official 1854 report into some abuses committed in Birmingham Borough Prison, where I myself worked a century and a half later. Every day, as I entered, I passed an oak notice board, on which one could read, displayed in gold lettering, the names of past governors of the prison. The second on the list was Lieutenant William Austin of the Royal Navy, whose cruelties—among those of other prison officials, including its doctor—a commission of inquiry had investigated.

To read the commission's report after Macpherson's is to enter a different world, one in which words mean what they appear to mean, the integrity of the commissioners is

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self-evident, facts count more than feelings, and conclusions follow from the evidence. In fact, to read the commission's report after Macpherson's is to experience a powerful sense of moral and intellectual progress—at least among the writers of official reports—but in the wrong temporal direction, alas. The prose of the commissioners, one of them a doctor, is clear, vigorous, and without the evasions and contradictions of Macpherson's writing. They write like men who know they are doing a good job well.

The event that brought the abuses to light was the suicide of a 15-year-old inmate named Edward Andrews, who had stolen four pounds of beef and been sentenced to three months' hard labor in the prison. The suicide revealed a pattern of abuse. The commission discovered that the prison imposed an entirely illegal system of "hard labour" that forced prisoners to turn a crank 10,000 times a day—2,000 before breakfast, 4,000 before lunch, and 4,000 before dinner. If a prisoner did not complete each stage, he lost the subsequent meal. If he did not complete the 10,000 by the end of the day, he was put on bread and water. The weight on the crank was adjusted, supposedly to meet each prisoner's physical capabilities.

The commissioners inspected the crank machines and described them with great clarity:

> Although in pressing the handle downwards the prisoner has only the five pounds to bear down, yet in lifting it up, when nearest his body, he has to exert a force equal to at least three times that weight; and according to the same evidence, the labour would be of a nature most severe and exhausting; insomuch as, taking into account the speed with which it must be performed in order to accomplish the number of revolutions required for a day's work, 10,000 namely, or nearly 30 revolutions a minute, we were assured that, in order to accomplish such a task, a boy would necessarily exert a force equal to one-fourth of the ordinary work of a draught horse; the average estimate of the work of a boy, in ordinary labour out of a prison, being about one-tenth of the same.

Young Andrews, unable to complete the work, was not only put on bread and water but also, on Lieutenant Austin's characteristically harsh order, dressed in the "punishment jacket." This consisted of an ordinary straitjacket, combined—again illegally—with a leather collar fixed around the prisoner's neck and attached to the wall. "Very speedily after [the jackets'] introduction into the prison," the commissioners explained, "they appear to have been converted into ordinary implements of punishment for non-performance of prison labour or breaches of prison discipline (frequently of a very trivial nature)."

The commissioners describe how the "punishment jacket" worked: "the prisoner being first muffled in the strait jacket, having his arms tied together on his breast, the leather stock fastened tightly round his neck, and being, moreover (where the punishment was inflicted by day), in almost every case strapped to the wall of his cell, in a standing position, by means of strong leather straps passed round the upper parts of the arms, and fastened to staples or hooks in the wall, so tightly as to draw back the arms into and keep them in a constrained and necessarily painful position, at the same time compressing them." After watching a willing volunteer strapped into the jacket, the commissioners realized that "it was obvious that such a mode of restraint must necessarily, if continued for several hours, be productive of great pain—in truth, that it must be an engine of positive torture." Their conclusion: "With respect, then, to the case of Edward Andrews, we are of opinion that, by the order and with the knowledge of the governor, he was punished illegally and cruelly, and was driven thereby to the commission of suicide."

The conclusion reflected a proper and transparently honest sifting of the evidence. The Macpherson report did not. Since 1854, prison conditions have improved. Since 1999, race relations have not.

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Letters

The Browning of America

To the editor:

I sincerely hope Edward Glaeser's article ["Green Cities, Brown Suburbs," Winter 2009] was tongue-in-cheek. It depends upon viewing CO_2 as a "pollutant," which it certainly is not. It is a basic necessity for all life on Earth and is no more detrimental than oxygen.

Robert LeFevers
Katy, TX

To the editor:

Professor Glaeser leaves out one crucial thing. Skyscrapers may be energy-efficient, but they require an absolutely reliable and constant source of electricity to power elevators and pump water as well as to heat and cool. Indeed, no other form of housing becomes so completely useless in the absence of reliable electricity. It seems to me that before saying "build more skyscrapers," we need to focus on the electrical supply system—"the grid"—which may (as with so much of our urban infrastructure) be in perilous condition.

Francis Morrone
Brooklyn, NY

A Little Understanding, Too

To the editor:

I disagree that Islamic people are not as forgiving and are deficient in irony, as your article [Roger Scruton, "Forgiveness and Irony," Winter 2009] seems to suggest. Consider the portrait of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. You miss the point if you don't grasp the disaffection of those who experience deliberate persecution; you will not understand the fury this unleashes in the world. Terrorism is an emotional and spiritual disease that calls for an honest and dispassionate diagnosis.

Niaz Butt
Islamabad, Pakistan

The Idea of It

To the editor:

Theodore Dalrymple ["The Persistence of Ideology," Winter 2009] describes my 1960 volume, *The End of Ideology*, as heralding the death of ideology and arguing that "the political question that had agitated humanity since the time of Plato" had been solved.

Not at all. I was writing about the movements that had their sources in the English Revolution (the Levellers, the Diggers, and the Fifth Monarch Men); those in the French Revolution (the Jacobins and the Babeufists); and those in the Russian Revolution—in other words, the modern movements that sought to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

But I was not naive. I did not think that this would be the end of all ideologies. In my book, I said that while the old nineteenth-century ideologies were exhausted, new ideologies of Pan-Arabism, nationalism, ethnic allegiances, and others were coming. See page 403, and the afterword in the Harvard 1988 edition, for a further elaboration of my argument.

People have been misled by my title, as Quentin Skinner was in the past and, to some extent, Theodore Dalrymple is today. More so, too, Francis Fukuyama, whose quasi-Hegelian apocalypse has blinded us further. I should point out that my teacher and master was Raymond Aron, the most sober political theorist I have ever known.

Daniel Bell
Professor Emeritus
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA

To the editor:

Ideology will never die while a large proportion of the population needs an ideological "blueprint" as a crutch. Rather than take responsibility for their own lives, they find it so much easier to cling to an ideology that provides all the answers and a plan for the future. Personal responsibility is the antithesis of ideology.

Brian Wimborne
Canberra, Australia

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Alberto Mena is the graphics and imaging director of *BusinessWeek*. **William Meyers** has photographs in the collections of the New York Public Library and other city institutions. **Arnold Roth** is a cartoonist whose work has appeared in *Punch*, *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, and many other publications. For cover artist **Simon Levenson,** see page 2.

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Too Busy for Self-Pity

Jonathan Foreman

Mumbai combines the vitality and intensity of Manhattan with the glitz of Los Angeles. In spots it resembles Miami, thanks to its palm trees, its little-known treasury of art deco buildings, and its oceanside vistas (though its beaches are too polluted for swimming). The city also contains vast shantytowns and strange little fishing villages that evoke the poorer corners of Latin America; they seem barely touched by the twentieth century, let alone the twenty-first. What makes Mumbai unique, however, is not its ability to encompass wealth and poverty, or hypermodernity and medieval squalor, but its tradition of resilience in the face of calamity.

In the past, the city has bounced back from riots, floods, and terrorist attacks with astonishing speed. For example, in 2006, Islamists set off bombs on the city's commuter trains, killing 209 people; the trains were packed the next day as if nothing had happened. After last November's terrorist attacks, though, many locals worried that this time would be different—that the spirit of Mumbai might not survive three days of gunfire and explosions in the city's heart, the evident inability of government to protect the people, and the panic stoked by 24-hour TV news coverage.

Yet revisiting Mumbai some weeks after witnessing the November sieges, I'm struck by the way Mumbaikars seem to have refused to let the attacks disrupt their way of life. The Taj and Oberoi Hotels were primary targets of the killers—I remember seeing the flames from the Taj roof leap into the night sky—but both hotels reopened in less than a month. The Chhatrapati Shivaji railway station (still called Victoria Terminus by most people) was back in service within *three hours* of the assaults there.

On my arrival, I immediately went to Leopold's Café, which was hit with grenades and machine-gun fire that killed six patrons and two waiters. It was overflowing, as ever, with a mixed crowd of Bombay boulevardiers and foreign backpackers. They seemed unfazed by the bullet holes visible in one of the front windows, deliberately left unrepaired by the owner.

New stories have emerged about what went on during the attacks. Many reveal the courage of strangers, like the sidewalk merchants who rushed onto the blood-splattered train station platforms to help the wounded only seconds after the terrorists left. No one makes a big deal about these stories. Apparently Mumbai is a city too busy for self-pity or self-dramatization.

My Mumbaikar friends do say that the city's typical exuberance hasn't returned. Moreover, many of the regulars at the superb restaurants in the Taj or the Oberoi, whose sense of belonging to the highest echelon of society was linked to the special treatment they received in such places, have not yet gone back. It is not fear that keeps them away, though many here believe that other terrorists are waiting to assault new targets. It is a distaste for having a good time at places where friends or relatives were gunned down or blown up. For their part, the chefs and staff have made it clear that they are not yet ready to cater to noisy celebrations.

Every evening on the pier outside the Taj, vast throngs from every part of Mumbai gather just to look at the hotel that has become a symbol of a city's grace under pressure. It's a strange tourism, perhaps similar to that which brought so many to Ground Zero, though here the crowd is mostly cheerful, not hushed. Some people eat ice cream or buy fresh peanuts from enterprising boys. Others negotiate rides on victorias, the horse-drawn carriages that ply the area for tourists. A surprising number are devout Muslims. There are young couples on dates and gaggles of schoolgirls. A man in a jacket and tie points out scorch marks from the hotel fire to his son, riding on his shoulders.

Over the buzz of the crowd, I hear hammers tapping behind the plywood screens covering the part of the facade under repair: builders are working 24 hours a day so that burned-out bars and restaurants can reopen. I wonder if the sound they make is the sound of victory over terror.

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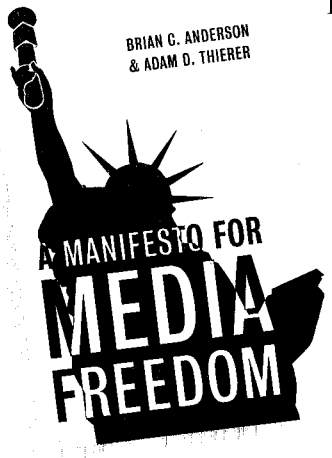

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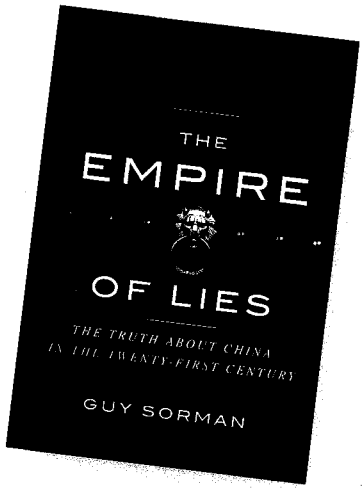

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